

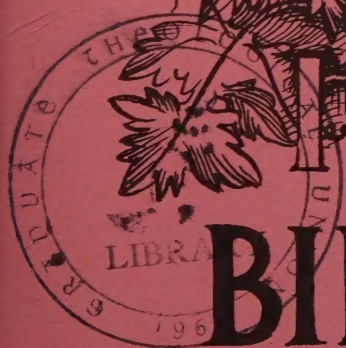
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# IRISH BIBLICAL STUDIES

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Towards an understanding of the "Kingdom of God" \*

David Hill

"The most certain historical datum about Jesus' life is that the concept which dominated his preaching, the reality which gave meaningfulness to all his activity, was 'the Kingdom of God' ". /1 "The central aspect of the teaching of Jesus was that concerning the Kingdom of God.... all else in his message and ministry serves a function in relation to that proclamation and derives its meaning from it". /2 . Assertions similar to these (from Jon Sobrino and Norman Perrin) could be found in any of a vast range of books - small and large, scholarly and popular, investigative and impressionistic - which are concerned with Jesus' message and ministry. It is indeed an opinio communis that the reality to which his proclamation points, whether it be by direct announcement, by parabolic illustration or by actions and behaviour, is "the Kingdom of God": the authenticity of that announcement and of many of the parables of the Kingdom is assured (for those who require the assurance) by their notability to survive the application of the critical criteria employed in establishing the historical trustworthiness of traditional Jesus-material preserved in the synoptic gospels. For this amount of unanimity we may be grateful: I wish there was similar unanimity as to what it is concerning which we are unanimous. What does, or more accurately perhaps, what did "the Kingdom of God" mean? That is not an inappropriate question for the exegete to ask. Even if one stresses (to the point of over-emphasis) the "symbol" character of the phrase, one must still try to say something about that which such a powerful "symbol" symbolizes: and if we are of the opinion (rightly, in my view) that "the Kingdom of God" locution did not possess or function with an unalterably fixed meaning by which all who used it had to abide, nevertheless its possible significances are limited to a fairly precise range - King/ruling/Kingdom notions associated with the God witnessed to in the Biblical tradition. I observe in passing that the phrase "Kingdom of God" on Jesus' lips cannot have signified something utterly unheard of and new, for he did not explain it to any audience; he must have assumed that they had some knowledge of its meaning; on the other hand, the locution cannot on Jesus' lips have had an unmistakeably clear and obvious significance: if it had, the



ould he have spent such effort in illustrating or giving  
mpses, as it were, into it?

If I had cited at the outset (of this lecture) Jeremiah's  
firmation that "the central theme of the public proclamat-  
a of Jesus was the kingly reign of God" I would have  
licated one important and widely agreed step towards  
understanding "the kingdom", namely that the word (malkūt  
Hebrew, malkūthā in Aramaic) does not denote a realm in  
spatial sense, or a territory, but rather "kingship",  
sign" or perhaps better "sovereign rule" This  
interpretation of basileia - which goes back to Dalman /4  
beyond (to B. Weiss and K.G. Grass) - is almost  
versally accepted, but R. Schnackenburg /5 and S. Aalen  
have both proposed that the rendering 'kingdom' rather  
n 'reign' is more appropriate for texts which speak of  
ering into the basileia. However, the observation that  
e idea of entering into "life" (Mk 9.43 par.) is quite  
elligible without our having to make the spatial factor  
licit by translating hē zōē as "the sphere of life" makes  
implausible that language about entering the malkūthā  
God requires a sharply defined change of meaning from  
ngly rule" to "the place over which God reigns".  
fessor Aalen's own suggestion that basileia designates  
use", runs into even more serious difficulties than does  
sign": a house is constructed or built; it does not "draw  
r" or "come"! And the very significant parallelism  
ween the second petition of the Lord's Prayer and the  
agogue's Kaddish (Let your reign come // May he (God) let  
reign reign) certainly favours "kingly rule" over "house".  
should be noted that some of those who are certain that  
basileia tou theou does not denote a place or community  
ed by God claim that the rendering "reign" or "kingship  
God" is too abstract /7: the malkūthā is neither a  
tial nor a static concept, they assert, but is a dynamic  
cept denoting quite concretely the reign of God in action,  
activity of God as king, and this reality might be  
ressed (though rather clumsily) by "the ruling of God" or  
e ruling activity of God". This is an insightful refine-  
t, as we shall see later, though the language of Ps. 145  
uld have never allowed it to be in doubt: there "the  
gdom of God" (which is "the dominion of God") is combined  
h "his mighty deeds", his "great work" (vs.11-13). Let  
now clear away another matter: the priority of the

Kingdom of God" over "the kingdom of heaven" (hē basileia tōn ouranon) in Jesus' diction. Both have the same meaning (for "heaven" is merely a paraphrase for God), but since, as Jeremias notes /8, "the term 'kingdom of heaven' appears for the first time in Jewish literature half a century after Jesus' ministry, with R. Johanan ben Zakkai C. AD 80", it is most improbable that this was the form of expression used by him: malkūthā' dē'lāhā is his presumed Aramaic speech-form. /9 But what would that have meant to his hearers? Since it is never explained, its basic intelligibility must be assumed. Jeremias is therefore correct in asserting that "if we are to understand the sayings of Jesus which deal with the basileia, it is extremely important that we should know what ideas the people of his time associated with the expression 'reign of God' ". /10 Investigation, however, reveals that the expression was not a common speech-form in pre-Christian times. A survey of the relevant literary materials - though they need not necessarily include all instances - yields the following results.

(A) The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the OT provide some references to God's lordship, usually over Israel, cast in the form of "thy kingdom" or "his kingdom", but there is only one which contains a virtual equivalent of hē basileia tou theou, and that is Psalms of Solomon 17.3 which says "The kingdom of our God is eternal over the nations in judgment" and that assertion, like the others, does no more than make precise a widespread aspect of OT belief. Now the absence from the apocalypses in the inter-testamental literature of the phrase "the kingdom of God" is, in my view, very significant. It was, and in some circles still is, a common presupposition that the "kingdom" locution is of apocalyptic provenance, yet here in the very materials where one would expect to find it, materials which often deal with the End-time and the messianic age, the precise phrase "the kingdom of God" is not found. /11. The apocalyptic character of Jesus' kingdom concept - which has been assumed as a matter of course since Schweitzer's famous study - is therefore questionable, even on the presupposition that we know exactly what "Jewish apocalyptic" meant to and for Jesus. And that is far from certain or agreed. When we recall that over fifty years ago Bultmann asserted that Jesus rejected "the whole content of apocalyptic speculation"



2 and that just a few years ago Norman Perrin was  
ting, with reference to the kingdom, that "the difference  
ween Jesus and ancient Jewish apocalyptic is much greater  
n Bultmann will allow", /13 we may be permitted to  
gest that the term "apocalyptic" - as applied to Jesus'  
aching of the Kingdom - is virtually emptied of all  
tent. The value and propriety of its continued use in  
s connection is open to serious question. Be that as it  
, apocalyptic usage does not provide sufficiently exact  
allels to Jesus' kingdom-locution for it to be considered  
the direct source of the dominical phrase.

(B) Secondly, what do we learn from the rabbinic pass-  
s which are from time to time introduced to illumine the  
gdom concept? These are too late for their assumed  
allels to be conclusive for interpretation. In the main  
s rabbinic evidence is limited to the stereotyped phrase  
e "to take the kingdom of heaven upon oneself" which means  
bject oneself to the divine order", "obey God", even "to  
eat the Shema" or "become a proselyte". /14 T.W. Manson  
impressed by this evidence in the exposition of the  
gdom in terms of divine authority accepted: "the claim on  
's part to rule, and the acknowledgement on man's part of  
t claim, together constitute the actual kingdom". /15  
ever appealing it may be to invoke personal relationship  
God as a dimension of the kingdom's significance,  
pecially when that dimension is completely fulfilled in  
us, we simply have to acknowledge the fact that dependence  
rabbinic allusions to "the kingdom of the heavens" for  
explication of Jesus' speech-form cannot be upheld.  
rin was correct in asserting that references in classical  
binic literature cannot be used with any certainty to  
ablish first century diction: he was also correct in  
eeing with Johannes Weiss /16 that the kingdom of God  
solely and only the activity of God; ideas about its  
lisation or manifestation in human experience through  
eptance or obedience only compromise the genuine  
herness" of the Kingdom.

A few words suffice to deal with the evidence from  
ran. The phrase "reign" with reference to God occurs only  
ee times in the Qumran corpus as known to us at present.  
of these (1QM 6.6 and 12.7) clearly denote God's  
ereignty: the third (in the Supplementary Blessing to the  
munity Rule, IQSb 4.25f) speaks of the angelic-like

priestly service "In the temple of the reign" (b<sup>e</sup> hēkāl malkūth) which presumably means the temple of the future when God's rule has been established in a new Jerusalem. There would seem to be very little illumination on Jesus' characteristic locution from the usage of the scrolls.

(D) We now come to a body of literature whose evidence has been rediscovered in the last few years, namely the Targums, and in particular the Targum to the latter prophets Dalman had of course noted the relevant passages in the Targums to Isaiah, Micah and Zechariah, and Weiss referred to them also and expressed his agreement with Dalman that their kingdom diction avoided anthropomorphism and affirmed "the transcendence . . . . which stands out so clearly in the proclamation of Jesus" and that their understanding of the kingdom as the Selbsterweisung Gottes (the self-revelation or self-demonstration of God) was a significant common element in the Targums and the NT. /17 But Weiss was so concerned to interpret the "kingdom" in the categories of late Jewish apocalyptic that he failed to do justice to the significance of his own insights on the Targumic material. Fruitful work in this connection is now being done with the care and caution that are required in this complex area of investigation. The Targums, as extant, are later, probably much later, than the NT documents: nevertheless, it is likely that Targums, incorporating as they do the exegetical understanding and vocabulary of the communities in which they were used, achieved their present form as a part of the process which produced Mishnah, Midrash and Talmud, a process dedicated to the preservation and evaluation of tradition. Consequently, since Jesus must have heard oral targums uttered which drew upon or contributed to tradition, it is not unreasonable to suggest that he was familiar with language and speech forms now contained in the Targums and that he may even have come to know these speech forms in association with the biblical passages which they presently explicate. That this is not a matter of sheer speculation can be demonstrated if positive coherence can be shown to exist between NT diction and a Targumic passage not just some vague, notional connection, but positive coherence which may be postulated only when there is a strong similarity in language which is not explicable on the supposition that the Hebrew and/or the Greek OTS have influenced the diction of the NT. If this similar language gives expression to the same thought or idea, then coherence



established with reference to diction: but the substance a rendering must be evaluated as well lest a deliberate joinder to Christian teaching be confused with a piece of possibly pre-Jewish translation-vocabulary or exegesis.

For example is it significant that in the Isaiah Targum the kingdom is "something" to be announced or preached, as it is according to the Gospels? /18 Yes, it is significant, because in none of the kingdom material in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha nor in any other relevant sources, is the kingdom proclaimed or announced. It would therefore appear that kingdom announcements (as distinct from announcements of salvation, destruction, Messiah's coming) are sui generis in the Targums (to Latter Prophets) and the NT. Now on a few occasions the Prophets Targums employ the phrase "Kingdom of God" or "Kingdom of the Lord" and that offers us a better linguistic parallel to dominical usage than anything so far found elsewhere; and those who have judiciously investigated this Targumic usage /20 agree that the "Kingdom of God" locution there denotes the dynamic presence of God, God personally present and active. The "kingdom", in Targumic speech (especially in the Isaiah Targum), is somehow separable from God nor is it simply a periphrasis for the verb "reign": it neither denotes an autonomous regime nor does it merely refer to the Lord's assertion of sovereignty: what is at issue is God's action, his very nature and being as God. For example, in the proclamatory utterances of Isaiah 40.9 and 52.7 the Masoretic text reads "Behold your God" and "Your God reigns" respectively: the Targum in both cases says "the kingdom of your God is revealed". Does that usage not signify more than what Jeremias and Jeremias blandly call it, "a periphrasis for God and ruler"? What the Targumic evidence - and it must be admitted as relevant, if not determinative, for at least the announcement logia - permits us to suggest is that Jesus' phrase "the Kingdom of God" (malkutā d'ēlaha) had immediate and personal reference to God and his activity, and in particular - and this draws upon the interpretative insights found in other relevant material - God's activity in reigning and ruling.

Now the character of this ruling action is not hidden or obscure: the model for understanding this kingship is the OT model of kingship wherein sovereignty, whether it be God's or the king's, includes not only the obvious notions of

dominion and power but also ideas associated with holiness, the maintenance of stability on the cosmic or national level, the establishment of righteousness and justice and, in consequence of these, the defence and succour of the oppressed and needy. /22 On this model kingship is most characteristically exercised in the activities of creating unity and peace, of upholding loyalty and righteousness with necessary acts and attitudes of mercy, protection and salvation. That is what God reigning means and implies and that, I submit, is what "the kingdom of God" means, God (and that is where the emphasis lies) exercising sovereignty. Norman Perrin comes nearest to the view when he writes, "The Kingdom of God is the power of God expressed in deeds: it is that which God does wherein it becomes evident that he is king" , /23 though Perrin admits that it is impossible to express this in a single English word. Jeremias also acknowledges the importance of the aspect of Jewish usage which we have been discussing when he remarks that the words "The Kingdom of God is near!" virtually mean "God is here - at the door, or already here". Confirmation of the basic correctness of the interpretation offered comes from the idiom of the Kaddish prayer of the ancient synagogue. This prayer, in Aramaic, was almost certainly in use at the time of Jesus and may have been known to him, since the first two petitions of the Lord's Prayer seem to be a modified version of it. A translation of the oldest text of the relevant phrases would run something like this: "Magnified and sanctified be his great name in the world which he has created according to his will. \_ May he let his Kingdom reign (yamlek vl. yimlök malkutēh) in your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime of all the house of Israel, even speedily and soon". "May he let his Kingdom (or 'reign') reign' obviously means "May God's reign be effectively established" or, in my terms, "May God exercising sovereignty be revealed and recognized". In talking about God's kingdom we are talking about something which is excitingly and grandly dynamic and "something" which, as we shall see later, has powerful eschatological significance as well.

But what is the "something" we have been talking about? Are we any closer yet to understanding the meaning and function of the phrase "the Kingdom of God" which I have been referring to as a dominican locution or speech-form and also trying to interpret? I must pursue this question



a little because of the importance of the last of Norman Perrin's three books on the Kingdom-theme, namely Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom. /25 Here Perrin demands that in the hermeneutical or interpretative process literary criticism should have its place alongside textual and historical criticism. Accordingly he asserts that "Kingdom of God" is not a conception (as generations of scholars have assumed) but a tensive symbol (i.e. a symbol with more than one referent), and he goes on to claim that the literary forms (parable, proverb etc.) and the language Jesus employed in proclaiming it were such as to mediate the reality evoked by that symbol, namely, the experience of God as king which finds effective interpretation in the ancient Jewish myth of God as kingly creator and kingly deliverer of his people.

Two observations on this analysis are in order. First, the understanding of symbol on which Perrin depends (Ricoeur and Wheelwright) regards a symbol as having a referent, as designating or symbolizing something other than itself: indeed, a symbol must have a literal meaning which points to a figurative meaning. /26 In these terms "Kingdom of God" cannot be a symbol because it has no literal meaning to point to a symbolic one. On the other hand, "kingdom" or "reign" has a literal meaning and is a symbol for God's activity, but "Kingdom of God" is not a symbol. Perrin states that "kingdom of God" evokes the myth of God's acting as king: but this myth is not the symbol's referent. In fact, there is a sense in which the myth is qualitatively identical with the term "the kingdom of God". (I need hardly say that I am using "myth" to denote a story or complex of stories which human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning and/or structure of the universe and of life). It could be argued that "kingdom of God" is not a symbol but a metaphor in which "kingship" is the concrete vehicle of meaning and "God" the means of indicating the transcendent, mysterious dimension: or one could say that "kingdom of God" is a micro-myth in relation to the more elaborate myths about divine activity, and as such it may evoke the larger myths but it does not symbolize them or anything else: rather it is something symbolized - in the myth, in narrative and in parable, as Perrin tacitly acknowledges when he refers to the Kingdom of God as the ultimate referent of the parable. The second observation is less technical: the kind of

literary critical approach worked out by Perrin assists our present-day understanding of the phrase "Kingdom of God" rather than what it meant in the lip and on the lips of Jesus. Was Jesus, in his kingdom-proclamation using, or aware that he was using, a symbol which makes it inappropriate to ask whether in his teaching the kingdom was present or future or both? I don't know, but I do know that a purely literary insight about the language of the gospel cannot sustain a historical conclusion about Jesus' state of mind or intention. /27 But historical criticism may enable us to offer responsible suggestions about Jesus' meaning. If our investigation has been conducted correctly then I would want and feel able to say that the "Kingdom of God" locution or speech-form on Jesus' lips (whether we call it metaphor, micro-myth or symbol) was his way of declaring, affirming, witnessing to (by means of a contemporary reverential circumlocution) the fact (conviction, belief?) that sovereignty is exercised by God in his kind of way wherein justice and mercy mingle. If that is myth, so be it! It is Jesus' affirmation and acknowledgement of how things really are: "God reigning" is how (to use words from Schillebeeckx) "God manifests his being God in the world".

/28 That Jesus confessed: he gave glimpses - in story and in deed - into what the reality, the real happening-ness of "God reigning" would be like in actual experience (and these we shall consider in subsequent lectures): and he claimed that the "God reigning" state of affairs was related to himself and to people's attitudes to himself. Now that claim - the historicity of which very few if any NT scholars would deny; indeed it is one of the three points on which G. Aulen found remarkable agreement in his survey of research (cf. G. Aulen, Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research, Fortress and SPCK 1976 p3) - implies a great deal about Jesus' authority and therefore his identity. In announcing and embodying the good news of the kingdom, of "God exercising sovereignty" (for he did represent in truth what he proclaimed) Jesus fulfils a function which could be described as "mediator of salvation" - and this is quite independent of whether he accepted the title of Messiah or spoke of himself as Son of Man or even understood his death as the means of salvation.

To describe Jesus' intimate personal relationship to the kingdom is difficult, and language is certainly stretched in



ne is to try to convey the understanding of "kingdom of od" I have been presenting. Some are satisfied to speak of Jesus as the bearer of the kingdom, but the word seems to imply or at least to suggest that what he bears is something: "inaugurator" of the kingdom is too limited by its temporal reference. Some are satisfied to say "representative" and I have already used "embodiment" but I am not content with that, nor indeed with "realisation". I have decided (at least for the time being) that the best term available is an old and little used one, "epiphany": its appropriateness is urged upon me by some remarkable sentences/phrases from the Pastorals.

Titus 2.11 "The grace of God has appeared -epephanē - bringing salvation to, perhaps making salvation possible for, all men." And a wonderful sentence from Titus 3.4 "When the goodness, the kindness (xrēstotēs) and the generosity or loving kindness (philanthrōpia) of God our Saviour appeared (epephanē)... he saved us." Of special interest is the use (admittedly in a rather awkward construction) of epiphaneia and basileia in 2 Tim 4.1, "in view of (or "in the name of" ver.B) his (Christ's) appearing and his kingdom." In a very detailed investigation of the historical use and making of epiphaneia Dieter Lührmann argues convincingly that here the noun (and the verb) signifies more than "presence", "appearance", "manifestation": it has a dimension of meaning that may be regarded as taking it into the range of salvation vocabulary, for it indicates "intervention which brings help or assistance". /29 It is that kind of sense in which I wish to put forward "epiphany"/epiphaneia as the word which (for me) expresses best the relationship between Jesus and the Kingdom of God", in accordance with my understanding of the latter phrase. "God exercising sovereignty", God's mode of being God, is manifested, makes a saving intervention into time (our historical time) in the person of Jesus. In him all that is meant by "God reigning" is encountered. That affirmation - which the texts will attest - is of extraordinary importance for NT christology. Other starting-points have been and still are used by scholars in their attempts to construct christology but I venture the opinion that the correct place to begin is here: in the life of Jesus, God's activity as king, "the way God reveals his being in the world", the God of Israel's godness, intervenes in history with its characteristic power, compassion and judgement.

Reflect on that and you will be on the way towards understanding Jesus' significance in his own terms and in terms of Christian faith as well.

Implicit in what has been said is the answer I would give to another of the major questions commonly asked concerning the kingdom, namely, is it present or future or both? If "the kingdom of God" is thought of as a reign or as a regime (even if only secondarily spatial) it makes sense to ask, Is it here yet? and if not, when will it be? And NT scholarship since Johannes Weiss (who called this "die unfruchtbare Fragestellung") has been trying to answer that kind of question, as the eschatology of Jesus has been variously defined as "consistent or thoroughgoing", (A. Schweitzer), "realised" (Dodd), "self-realising" (Jeremias) and probably most commonly "inaugurated" (i.e. commenced but not concluded or consummated). But if the results of our inquiry and interpretation are so far correct then we are in a position to see that all talk about the kingdom being present or future, realised or inaugurated, is really talk about God's exercise of sovereignty and that is not limited by time nor appropriately subjected to our neat time categories of past, present and future. But because we have to speak within our limitations and because "the kingdom" is "God acting in his kingly way", we may apply any of our temporal dimensions to "kingdom" (for God has been, is and will be king), but we must realize that none of these can claim to be exclusively correct, only more appropriate in certain situations and contexts. When Jesus announces the kingdom, as in his first recorded words, the reference may and indeed must be taken as present. "God exercising sovereignty" has come (ēngiken - and I have the utmost difficulty in thinking that the Greek word means anything else); it is happening now. Jeremias' instinct concerning that verse is right, "What is being said is 'God is near...at the door...already here'". Again Jesus says (Lk 17.20f) in a much misunderstood text "The kingdom of God is entos humōn" which means, certainly not "within you" and probably not "among you" but, in accordance with a usage from the papyri, "in your hands", "within your grasp".

/30 Texts like these - and the number could be multiplied many times - already show that attempts to see "the Kingdom" in terms of a future regime, a political movement or a programme for social improvement are not only highly problematic as exegesis, but are in danger of putting an



ology (ancient or modern) in the place of repentance and faith. If the announcement of the kingdom is the announcement of the present-ness of God's exercising sovereignty as present reality has to be apprehended, acknowledged. But "the Kingdom" interpreted in terms of God's disclosure of his kingly activity can also be viewed as moving toward an irresistible climax in which he will be fully revealed and inaugurated by the power and compassion which manifest in action the nature of his sovereignty. It is interesting to observe that both Jesus' proclamation and the diction of the Targums understood "the kingdom" in all these dimensions: to assert one at the expense of the other two is to introduce a false systematization into their usage. The question as to when sovereignty or rule is asserted over a people or a territory (being based on the exclusivist time scheme) is inappropriate to the dominical insistence that "the Kingdom" is God exercising sovereignty, God's mode of being God. This we talk about best, not in terms of a time-sequence (for God is, has been and ever will be king) but in terms of the sight and experience of power, that creates and renews, authority that judges and protects, justice that sifts and saves.

But in order to gain the sight and enter the experience - and the possibility of doing so is indeed good news - we too have to heed Jesus' words. "The Kingdom of God is here and now: repent and believe in the gospel." Believing in the truth of the kingdom's announcement and presence takes courage: committing oneself to the affirmation and letting it permeate one's life is even more demanding and thrilling. Like Jesus' first hearers find it very hard to let the control go and experience the radical excitement. We need to repent: we need to go back, as it were, and start all over again with a new attitude and outlook, a new goal, a new set of values. As I reflect on the message of Jesus found in the synoptic gospels, I become more certain that the call "repentance" cannot really be distinguished from the call to discipleship. "Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." Acknowledging, welcoming, accepting the disclosure of God's saving sovereignty requires the childlike (the beginner's) capacity to take on trust, to be surprised, expectant, open and demands willingness to take risks and be loyal. It sounds straightforward: but in fact it is deeply disturbing, even offensive, especially to the sophisticated and religious 73

people. "Blessed is the man who is not offended at or by me," said Jesus. Most people were offended, upset; most people did not repent: few, only a handful, followed and entered into the experience, the excitement, the joy and the demand, of the kingdom, the experience of sovereign grace, for that is but another way of saying "God exercising lordship, his kind of lordship, in the world".

### Notes

1. Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads (Eng.Trans., SCM Press, London 1973), p42
2. Norman Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (SCM Press, London 1967), p54.
3. J. Jeremias, NT Theology I: The Proclamation of Jesus, (Eng. Trans., SCM, London 1971), p96
4. G. Dalman, The Words of Jesus (ET, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1902) p94
5. R. Schnackenburg, God's Rule and Kingdom (ET, Nelson, London 1963), p354f
6. S. Aalen, "'Reign' and 'House' in the Kingdom of God in the Gospels", NTS, VIII (1961/62) pp215-40, espec. pp220ff.
7. N. Perrin, op.cit., p55; J. Jeremias, op.cit., p98; R. Schnackenburg, op.cit., p13.
8. J. Jeremias, loc.cit.
9. The Qumran texts confirm that in pre-Christian times there was no hesitation about using 'el or 'elohim. The synoptic gospels all place "God" on the lips of Jesus very frequently.
10. Jeremias, op.cit., p97
11. Cf. T.F. Glasson, "The Kingdom as Cosmic Catastrophe", Studia Evangelica III, part ii (ed. F.L. Cross): Texte und Untersuchungen 88 (Berlin 1964), pp 187-8; and more recently in the opening chapters of his Jesus and the End of the World, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh 1980).
12. R. Bultmann, Jesus and the Word (ET, NYork<sup>2</sup> 1958 from 1926 German edition) p39



- Hill, Kingdom of God, IBS:3, April 1981
13. N. Perrin, Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom (SCM, London 1976), p77
  14. Cf. G. Dalman, op.cit., p98
  15. T.W. Manson, The Teaching of Jesus (Cambridge 1931) p131
  16. J. Weiss, Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom (ET, SCM London 1971)
  17. J. Weiss, op.cit., p74
  18. Cf. P. Stuhlmacher, Das paulinische Evangelium I: Vorgeschichte, (FRALNT 95, Göttingen 1968) pp142-51
  19. Isa.21,23; 31.4; 40.9;52.7; Ezek 7.7,10; Obad 21; Micah 4.7,8; Zech 14.9
  20. Cf. B.D. Chilton, "Regnum Dei Deus Est" (SJT XXXI 1977, pp261-270 (to which I am here indebted); also his major study, God in Strength: Jesus' Announcement of the Kingdom (Freistadt 1979); also Klaus Koch, "Offenbaren Wird sich das Reich Gottes", NTS XXV (1978-79) pp158ff
  21. Jeremias, NT Theology I, p102
  22. The so-called "royal" Psalms provide clear expression of the characteristics of genuine kingship as applied to God and to the Israelite ruler (actual or ideal); cf. espec. Pss 21, 45, 72.1-12 and 101
  23. Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus, p55
  24. Jeremias, NT Theology, p102
  25. Fortress Press(USA) and SCM (London), 1976
  26. Here I am in debt to Dan O. Via's review of Perrin's book in Interpretation XXXI (1977), pp181-3
  27. Cf. Q. Quesnell's review of Perrin's book in CBQ XXXIX, 1977, pp 290-92. Mpte what Perrin says (p199): "In the last resort my option may not produce a result significantly different from a Bultmannian understanding of the eschatology of Jesus".
  28. E. Schillebeeckx, Jesus: An Experiment in Christology (ET, Collins 1978) p141; note also the phrase "God's

Lordship is God's mode of being God", p142

29. D. Lührmann, "Epiphaneia" in Tradition und Glaube (Festschrift for K.G. Kuhn, Vandenhoeck and Reprecht, Göttingen 1971) pp185-199.
30. Cf. A. Rüstow, ZNW (1960) and the Bauer/Arndt-Gingrich Lexicon, 2nd ed. sub voce (entos).



n Doing Violence to the Kingdom

David R. Catchpole

Few sayings have exercised a more dynamic influence over studies of the Gospel tradition than Matthew 11.12-13 (par. Luke 16.16ba), with its correlation of the two ideas of violence and God's kingship. Since Hans Conzelmann /1 claimed that the Lukan form provides 'the key to the topography of redemptive history', its central position in redaction-critical studies of Lukan theology has been secure. And since Ernest Käsemann, in his famous lecture of 20 October 1953 inaugurating the so-called new quest of the historical Jesus, /2 made the Matthaean form the climax of his call for a recognition of the implicit Christology contained in Jesus' own words, it has been imperative to reconstruct the history of this tradition and to determine its original significance.

Since this article is ultimately concerned with the earliest form of the tradition, the view of Kaeseman is more relevant. For him the original (authentic Jesus) form ran broadly as follows: "The law and the prophets are in force until John; from the days of the Baptist until now/today the kingdom of God suffers violence and is hindered by men of violence." On such a basis, with eloquent forcefulness and with language echoing sometimes Luke and sometimes Luther, Kaeseman declares: "The OT epoch of salvation history concludes with the Baptist, who himself already belonged to the new epoch and is not to be counted among the prophets. The situation in this epoch is that the kingdom of God has already dawned but is still being obstructed." Where does this put John? He "stands in the shadow of him who now speaks and utters his 'until today'". And who then is Jesus? "He who brings with his Gospel the kingdom itself: the kingdom which can yet be obstructed and snatched away for the very reason that it appears in the defenceless form of the Gospel." In sum, "it was the belief of Jesus that, in this word, the kingdom was coming to his hearers." /3 Such an understanding of Jesus proved epoch-making in the history of research but now, just over twenty-five years after Kaesemann spoke, it is important to examine

(a) whether his reconstruction of the earliest form of the tradition was right, (b) whether the Baptist is indeed overshadowed by Jesus in this saying, (c) whether the kingdom was coming in Jesus' word and (d) whether we can pinpoint the nature of the violence.

# 1. Matthew 11.12f in the Matthaean context

The verbal agreement between Matthew and Luke is sufficient to show that we are dealing with Q material. At the same time the two versions disagree in setting and internal arrangement. Whereas Matthew's context deals with John the Baptist, Luke begins with this saying a trio of law-oriented sayings (16.16-18) in an overall context concerned with property and prosperity (16.1-31). Additionally, whereas Matthew has the statement linking John and the kingdom first, Luke has it second. We need to judge how well the Matthaean features match tendencies in Matthaean theology in order to uncover any pre-Matthaean, i.e. Q features.

Already at the Q stage the material presented in Matthew 11 showed two distinct tendencies, sometimes considering John favourably in his own right (Matthew 11.11b). Matthew's own view is expressed in the redactional section (11.14f), i.e., in the John=Elijah equation which W. Trillinger has quite rightly called the climax in Matthew's train of thought. /4 Now in this statement of Matthew's own view (i) the description of Elijah as "the one who is about to come" uses the verb 'mello' which clearly makes him a participant in eschatological events. Such a nuance is required by Matthaean usage elsewhere, e.g., in the references to "the wrath which is about to come" (3.7=Lk 3.7), "neither in this age nor in the one which is about to come" (12.32, diff. Mark 3.29/Lk 12.10), /5 and "the Son of man is about to come" (16.27; diff. Mk 8.38). Matthew is able to fasten on to the quotation of Malachi 3.1 in 11.10 (= Lk 7.27), which was itself designed to amplify the phrase "more than a prophet". /6 That phrase had promoted John above the rank of prophet so that, while there is an aspect of his person which does not necessarily bring him into the setting of eschatological fulfilment, the point of real concern which is emphasized by the quotation and re-emphasized by Matthew is that John does belong to the period of



fulfilment as an eschatological participant.

This has an important bearing on the prima facie ambiguous language in Matt 11.12f and in particular on the double use of the preposition "until" (heos) in the phrases "from the days of John the Baptist until now" (v12) and "until John" (v13). In itself this preposition, designed to indicate a limiting point in time (e.g., 17.17= Mk 9.19; 27.45= Mk 15.33; 28.20), can either include what happens at that point (so 24.21= Mk 13.19; 27.8) or exclude what happens at that point (so 26.29 diff. Mk 14.25). Therefore only the context can clarify the sense. In this context 11.12 uses "until" as part of a double time-note in which "the days of John the Baptist" stand for the period of his public activity (cf. similar references in 2.1- 23.30; diff. Lk 11.48; 24.37= Luke 17.26). Reference to such a period rather than to a mere point of time suggests that "from the days of John the Baptist" is inclusive and that "until now" which merely fixes the moment of speaking is also inclusive. /8 However, the conjunction "for" makes v13 the basis of v22 and therefore a reference to the change which takes place at the time when John's activity starts. Therefore "until" is inclusive in v12 and exclusive in v13, so that the latter does not include John in the activity covered by the verb "to prophesy". That means theologically that v12ff see John as belonging to the period of fulfilment and eschatological participation, and therefore that the outlook of 11.12f is identical with the outlook of the redactional 11.14f. It means also in terms of the present sequence involving 11.11, that Matthew is concerned to follow up the reference to the kingdom in 11.11b but to qualify emphatically and adversatively the depreciating comment which separates John from the kingdom.

At the same time as we reach this conclusion about 11.12 and 11.14ff we must notice internal signs of awkwardness within 11.12f. (i) A description of two points of time is most logically formulated with the first one coming first, and all the more so when the content of what is said about the first is the basis of what is said about the second. (ii) The reference to law is odd in that Matthew says nothing more about it in his context. Not only so, the law is the subject of the verb "to prophesy" is odd as is the order of "the prophets and the law". While these

awkwardnesses might be characteristic of the original tradition which has subsequently been improved<sup>9</sup>, they are more likely to stem from the well-attested Matthaean habit of sacrificing stylistic smoothness for the sake of overriding concern.

At this point some counter-arguments marshalled by P. Hoffmann /10 have to be considered. He finds in the word "all" (11.12) a tendency to generalize and expand which diverges from the tendency to delimit the reference to John the Baptist and make it more exact (11.14), so that both features cannot in view be Matthaean-redactional. On this basis he finds that "all" not only antedates Matthew but also in consequence requires syntactically the order "the prophets and the law" and the verb "to prophesy". Moreover, he argues, Luke 16.16a is the secondary version, reflecting both Lukan theology and the Hellenistic critique of law. This is not convincing for the following reasons: (i) The concentration on John in 11.14 is precisely the consequence of his initiating period of fulfilment, which is not the case in respect of the prophets as a whole. In other words the differentiation noted by Hoffmann is not an indication of a different literary situation but part of the scheme which pinpoints a change with John. (ii) Matthew's repeated insistence on the preparatory role of a wide range of prophets, comprising Isaiah (1.22f, etc), Jeremiah (2.18, etc) Daniel (26.64), Hosea (2.15), Micah (2.6), Zechariah (21.5, etc), and Malachi (11.10), is quite sufficient to provoke the "all". (iii) The present form of Luke 16.16a must certainly antedate the attempt, whether by Luke or by the editor of Q, to qualify and defuse its explosive force by adding Luke 16.17.

So we can conclude that several of the features distinguishing Matt 11.12f from Luke 16.16 are in harmony with the pattern of Matthaean redactional activity in the context, but that Matthew still leaves behind evidence of a pre-Matthaean tradition whose first half spoke about "the law and the prophets" but without the accompanying verb "to prophesy". /11 This suggests that this same first half defined the scope or validity of law and prophets as coming to a climax with John the Baptist.

## 2. Luke 16.16ab in the Lukan context

The trio of sayings in Luke 16.16,17,18 is held together



common concern with law: 16.16a speaks of a time limit on law (and prophets), 16.17 deals with the authority of very detail in the law, and 16.18 is legal in formulation ("Every one who...and he who...") even though in substance it undermines one specific law in Deut. 24.1-4. Therefore three originally separate sayings have been brought together by a common concern with law in spite of considerable tension between their outlooks. This bringing together is not, however, the work of Luke for two reasons. Firstly, the trio interrupts his overall sequence in Luke 16. Certainly the movement from the theme of riches/property in 16.1-15 to the theme of law and prophets in 16.16 matches the movement from the rich v. poor contrast in 16.19-26 to the witness of "Moses and the prophets" in 16.27-31, but there remains too much of the content of 16.16-18 which is not relevant to the concerns of Luke 16 as a whole to encourage the view that Luke has brought all the disparate traditions together. Secondly, there is a schematic agreement with material in Matt.5: Lk 16.16,17,18 corresponds to Matt.5.17, 18,32. /12

In connection with this pre-Lukan collection of sayings the relationship between Matt 5.17 and Lk 16.16, the two varying versions of the "law and prophets" saying, is particularly important. (i) Only rarely in the gospel tradition do we meet with the combination "the law and the prophets", i.e. in Matt 5.17; in 7.12 (diff. Luke 6.31) which combines with 5.17 to bracket the main section of the sermon on the Mount and is therefore Matthaean redaction; in 22.40 (diff Mark 12.31) where the addition of "the prophets" is clearly redactional; in Lk 24.44, "the law and the prophets and the psalms", which looks very much like Lukan redaction; and in Luke 16.16! Matthew is therefore prepared to introduce references to "the law and the prophets", but the schematic agreement between Matt.5.17 and Luke 16.16 suggests that such has not happened here. Moreover, the fact that Matt 5.17 and Luke 16.16 are the only such references to have any claim to rest on earlier traditions reinforces the likelihood that they are not unrelated. (ii) Both Matt 5.17 and Luke 16.16a deal with the problem of defining the period of the validity of the law and prophets. Whereas Mt 5.17 says there is no limit on such validity and that Jesus most definitely did not impose one, Luke 16.16a positively encourages the idea of

such a limit. That means that underlying both versions there is a common concern with one specific problem, so that in one version a suggestion is put forward only to be rebutted by the other. The necessary corollary is that the Vorlage of both was indeed dangerously radical. (iii) In terms of form Matt 5.17 is heavily indebted to Matthaean redaction as its correspondence with 10.34 (diff Luke 12.51) demonstrates. But the presence of a Vorlage is also attested by its internal awkwardness: an overall concern with law (thus 5.17 leads directly into 5.18,19) has produced an antithesis between "abolish" and "fulfil" which is thoroughly fitting (cf. 2 Macc 2.22; 4 Macc 5.33; Josephus Ant. 13.296,408) in a discussion of law and thoroughly unfitting in a discussion of prophets. Prophets can be "fulfilled" but scarcely "abolished". This awkwardness has led some to regard the words "and the prophets" as a later addition, but this suggestion does not square with the evidence of tradition already mentioned. Therefore internal evidence suggests that underlying Matt 5.17 there is a saying which refers to "the law and the prophets", and in such a way as to suggest that the point in time has been reached at which their validity ends.

As far as the significance of Luke 16.16ab in the Lukan context is concerned we can therefore record another preliminary result to the effect that there was a pre-Lukan collection on which Luke 16.16-18 is based and within which a time-limit was imposed on "law and prophets". Not only does this converge with the results of our study of Matt 11.12f in the Matthaean context but it has two other implications. Firstly, if one "law and prophets" sayings underlies both Matt 5.17 and 11.13, we can see a certain symmetry in the two passages where Matthew used that saying: in 5.17 the concentration was upon law, with fulfilment the superimposed control, while in 11.13 the concentration was on prophets with prediction the superimposed control. Secondly, the absence of any allusion in the Matt 11 context to the Matt 5.18= Luke 16.17 and the Matt 5.32=Luke 16.18 material, with which the archetype of Matt 5.17/11.13= Luke 16.16a belonged, suggests that the present position of Matt 11.12f is the product of Matthaean redaction. /13 Confirmation of that suggestion, however, depends also on the results of the following section.





to assimilate this parable to the discussion of John is already clear from (i) the positioning of the parable immediately after Mark 11.27-33 = Matt 21.23-27, which debated the topic of authority by reference to John, and (ii) the assimilation to the wording of Mark 11.31 in Matt 21.32 itself: "you did not believe him...they believed him you did not believe him". But in addition to this evidence there are four features linking Matt 21.32 and Luke 7.29f: the common reference to John, the common reference to tax collectors, the common use of the "righteousness" word group and the common antithesis between the tax collectors who respond to him and others who reject him.

We can now add the contribution of a series of features of Matt 21.32 which look like reminiscences of the material presently surrounding Luke 7.29f in Luke and which strengthen the view that this was the context of the Vorlage of Luke 7.29f in Q. (i) "John came..." This formulation occurs in the synoptic tradition only at Matt 21.32 and Matt 11.18 = Luke 7.33. Coincidence is hardly a likely explanation, and any idea of dependence on Matt 21.32 is ruled out, of course. Therefore it is very likely that Matthew's wording is reminiscent of the Q saying which is most easily explained if his attention was drawn to it by the immediate context. (ii) "The way of righteousness". Following the retrospective view of the mission of John as a whole which is implicit in "John came..." (and indeed in the discussion of John's baptism and authority in 21.23-27) Matthew's reference to "the way of righteousness" should probably be taken as programmatic, i.e. the implementing of a plan rather than (as understood by W. Michaelis /19) a description of John's character as righteous. This sense of a plan not only matches the sense of the Lukan purpose (7.30) but it also recalls the immediately preceding reference to Malachi 3.1 "he shall prepare your way before you" (Matt 11.10 = Luke 7.27). When the same quotation occurs in Mark 1.2 Michaelis interprets it in terms of "plan", "enterprise", "work", /20 and I doubt whether hesitation should be shown in seeing this same implication in the Q quotation. Given the extreme rareness of the term "way" with this implication it is all the more likely that Matt 21.32 is a reminiscence of Matt 11.10 = Luke 7.27.

The third section of this investigation can therefore be



and up with the conclusion that there was a tradition underlying Matt 21.32/Luke 7.29f and acting in Q as a bridge between Matt 11.7-11 = Luke 7.24-28 and Matt 11.16-19 = Luke 11.31-35. This exactly fits the conclusions of earlier sections, to the effect that the Vorlage of Matt 11.12f belonged, not to the present Matthaean Q context, but to the present Lukan Q context. The tendency to re-order material is in general much greater in Matthew than in Luke, and this tendency is being encountered here again.

#### 4. The original wording of the tradition

The argument so far has suggested, firstly, that Luke's until (16.16ab = Matt 11.13,12) is more probably original; secondly, that the original subject of the saying's first half was "the law and the prophets"; thirdly, that "all" and "prophecy" are secondary Matthaean alterations; fourthly, that the original saying implied the fixing of a time limit "the law and the prophets". It remains to determine the proposition used in the first half and the wording in general of the second half of the saying.

In the first case mexri seems the most likely word for "until". /21 It occurs infrequently in the gospels and Acts (Mark 13.30- Matt 11.23; 13.30; 28.15; Luke 16.16; Acts 13.30; 20.7). Signs of a tendency away from it are provided by the change to heos in Matt 24.34/Luke 21.32 (diff Mark 13.30). Moreover in Matt 11.23 Jesus declares against Nazareth, "If the mighty works done in you had been done in Caesarea, it would have remained until (mexri) this day." This is a remodelled version of Luke 10.12 (= Matt 10.15). Coming in the Matthaean sequence so soon after Matt 11.13, the occurrence of this untypical word looks like a reminiscence of the earliest form of that saying.

In the second case, there is widespread agreement that the words "of God" are more likely to be primitive than "of heaven" but that otherwise Luke 16.16b reflects typical Lukan rhetorical tendencies. The whole "violence" complex expresses Lukan convictions very happily when it is a matter of everyone entering forcibly into the kingdom of God in response to gospel preaching, but the Matthaean form is less easily absorbed and accommodated. The main area of doubt

is the time note which in Matt 11.12 runs: "from the days of John the Baptist until now". (i) The words "the Baptist" could well be a Matthaean redaction in line with Matt 3.1 (diff Mark 1.4) and 17.13 (diff Mark 9.13), and in this case the emphasis on baptism in the Q bridge section Luke 8.29f could well be making its influence felt in the double reference to "the Baptist" in Matt 11.11 (diff Luke 7.28) and 11.12 (diff Luke 16.16b). Moreover, the more detailed definition of John's person is apt in the first half of the bipartite saying referring to him (so Matthew) but not in the second half (so Q). Therefore Q is unlikely to have contained the words "the Baptist". (ii) The words "from the days of John" could conceivably be a Matthaean redactional replacement for "from then". /22 However, it is unlikely that Matthew would suppress his favourite link word "then" or indeed the phrase "from then" which elsewhere he three times introduces (4.17 diff Mark 1.14; 16.21 diff Mark 8.31; 26.16 diff Mark 14.11) and never drops. Further, it has already been noted that a reference to "the days of..." occurs elsewhere in Q (Matt 24.37 = Luke 17.26). So "from the days of John" is likely to be pre-Matthaean. (iii) The words "until now" have a slight query hanging over them. The preposition heōs is typical of Matthaean redaction while arti occurs redactionally at 3.15- 9.18 (diff Mark 5.23)- 23.39 (?diff Luke 13.35)- 26.39 (diff Mark 14.45); 26.53 (without parallel); and 26.64 (diff Mark 14.62). On the other hand there is no clear reason for the insertion of "until now" /23 , and present, rather than aorist, tenses of the verb "suffers violence" and "take by force" read more smoothly if such a time-note is present.

Therefore the Q form of the tradition probably corresponded almost exactly to Luke 16.16a + Matt 11.12:

The law and the prophets were until (mexri) John;  
 From the days of John until (heōs) now (arti)  
 the kingdom of God suffers violence (biazetai) and  
 And men of violence (biastai) take is by force  
 (harpazousin)

# 5. The origin and meaning of the reconstructed tradition.

The implications of Luke 16.16a are radical indeed for the "law and the prophets", so radical in fact that it was felt



necessary to add immediately the tradition underlying Matt 16.18 = Luke 16.17 in order to contain its explosive force. It scarcely needs saying that the interpretation of Luke 16.16a must firmly distance itself from that originally disconnected statement of the lasting validity of the law.) In fact, no one with traditional Jewish theological reflexes could have generated the saying in question. Could it be that, as S. Schulz has suggested, /24 it belongs to the Hellenistic-Christian stratum in Q and that, as Hoffmann /25 argued, it presupposes the Hellenistic critique of the law? That would leave unexplained the singling out of John rather than Jesus as the person by reference to whom the crisis for law and prophets is defined. In this saying, which is both critical in respect of "law and prophets" and complimentary towards John, it is much more likely that we hear the voice of Jesus and, in effect, the expression of an outlook which ultimately developed into the Hellenistic critique of law.

This brings us to Matt 11.12. The relationship between Luke 16.16a and Matt 11.12 is so close, being at one and the same time complementary, symmetrical and antithetical, that the occasional suggestion that the two were originally separate (so for example G. Barth /26 ) has little attractiveness. But the details in Matt 11.12 itself have still to be interpreted, and that applies to both the mention of violence and the time note.

As G. Schrenk argued long since /29 , the verb εἰσέρπειν and the language of violence together indicate opposition and so ensure that both are used in malam partem (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.214). The usage of the former in the NT normally involves one of two senses, either an ecstatic "catching up" (e.g. Acts 8.39; 2 Cor 12.2,4) or an adverse use of force (e.g. Matt 12.29; John 10.12; Acts 23.10). Consequently Matt 11.12 is describing neither a "movement of passionate longing" (J. Weiss /28 ) nor "the host of eager penitents which is wringing the kingdom from God so that it may now come at any moment" (A. Schweitzer /29) , but rather hostility suffered and opposition experienced by God's kingship. While rabbinic literature from the third century AD knows about violence as a means designed to bring to the end /30 , the texts are too late in time for the understanding of Matt 11.12 and Billerbeck rightly observes that the meaning is different here. The closest parallel is probably in the Qumran material's notion of an

eschatological Holy War between good and evil forces on both supernatural and human levels. /31 In the context of 1QH 2. 10-17, 20-30 and 6. 22b-35 particular note must be taken of the speaker's claims: "I was exposed to the affronts of the wicked, and an object of slander on the lips of the violent" (2.10f) and "violent men have sought my soul because I leaned on your covenant; but they are an assembly of vanity and a congregation of Belial" (2.21f).

This is of some importance when allied to the implications of the time note "from the days of John until now". The tracing of the violence back to the time when John's mission began precludes any reference to the Zealots /32, for the Zealot movement anticipated John by some twenty years. On the other hand the association between John and the kingdom of God needs to be explained. That association can be understood, and almost certainly must be understood, in terms of preaching. That is, John the Baptist is here regarded as having preached the coming kingdom and experienced strong opposition, and the same pattern of preaching and experience now characterizes Jesus. Such an explanation would explain how a stimulus was provided for Matthew in two areas: (i) He puts in the mouth of John the message that Jesus preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (3.2, diff Mark 1.1, cf 1.15), just as elsewhere he assimilates Jesus to John. (ii) He uses harpazein for opposition directed at the "word" in 13.19 (diff Mark 4.15). But more importantly the setting or the context of the activity of the "violent ones" in 11.12 corresponds to the setting of the activity of the violent ones in 1QH whose attack is (i) immediately pre-eschatological - so 1QH 2.23f; 6.29-33 - and (ii) directed against the person who, in his view, possesses the authentic understanding of the will of God and the authorised status for communicating it - so 1QH 2.13f, 17f.

This interpretation of Matt 11.12 in terms of eschatological imminence diverges from the view of Kaesemann which has been stated above and followed by a very substantial number of scholars. /33 But that view is in any case open to dispute. Firstly, there is no indication (pace Kaesemann) that the "now/today" gives any significance to Jesus over and above that attached to John. Indeed, since the "now" is not itself a point of change, the formulation is similar in intent to that in Mark 13.19 = Matt 24.21: "In those days

here will be such tribulation as has not been from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, and ever will be." The words "until now" (heos tou nun) merely allude to the moment of speaking but mark no change of any sort, let alone deeper significance. This leads to the second point, namely, that the presence of the kingdom in the sense suggested simply cannot be predicated of the Baptist's mission, but rather at most the preaching of the near kingdom. Such an emphasis on nearness, that is, imminence rather than realization, allows Matt 11.12 to stand on its own feet without any support from, for example, Matt 2.28 which has no reference to John; it also keeps the saying free from the influence of those secondary developments appearing in Luke 16.16b; it also avoids the logical pitfall of assuming that if the kingdom is assaulted then it must be present; Moreover, it presents a view of John and his preaching which is wholly and without strain in line with the authentic tradition preserved at the beginning of Q. Finally, if Jesus is here associated with John in such a way that the latter is in no way depreciated, then this saying in Matt 11.12 (like its partner in Luke 16.16a) very probably originated with Jesus.

In Matt 11.12, therefore, opposition to the kingdom is the meaning attached to opposition to the preaching of the nearness of God's kingdom, preaching which characterizes John and Jesus alike. But the full implication of this material can only emerge when Luke 16.16a and Matt 11.12 are lamped together and interpreted as a single whole. When this is done, the emergent scheme involving two successive periods could be taken as the germ of a salvation-historical programme. This would, however, probably represent a shift in emphasis and a slight confusion of Jesus with Luke. The emphasis should rather be discerned on the basis of the correlation of two contexts, that is, the preaching of the near kingdom versus the law and the prophets, and the preachers of the near kingdom versus the violent ones. This has a double significance. Firstly, it means that two contrasting interpretations and expressions of the will/demand of God are envisaged when "law and prophets" are mentioned but immediately relegated in favour of the preaching of the near kingdom. Now they are no longer an adequate basis for an understanding of the will of God or an adequate articulation of the word of God. Now, in the new



situation, everything is tested and controlled and determined by the call of the near kingdom. Secondly, it means that the violent ones are those who not only fail to respond to the preaching of the near kingdom but also oppose it in the name of the continuing relevance or applicability or efficacy or authority of the law and the prophets. So conservative theologians (of all people) turn out to be the violent ones, the persons who set out to "jam" the transmission of the word and call of God announced by John and Jesus!

This interpretation receives corroboration in three related areas: (i) In the analogous situation outlined in 1QH the forces opposed to one another on the human level differ precisely over the question of how the will of God is to be understood and interpreted. The speaker, like John and Jesus, understands himself as possessing the true view of the will of God although, unlike them, he remains thoroughly grounded in law. (ii) The displacement of "law and prophets" is similar to the displacement of the Abrahamic connection in the Baptist's preaching (Matt 3.10 : Luke 3.9). It is not so much that John attacks the Abrahamic link in itself as that he insists that it is no longer a basis for dealings with God. Now, on the eve of crisis the all-controlling preoccupation must be with God as coming judge. (iii) The oft-quoted parallel in Matt 23.12 = Luke 11.5a can now be claimed as coming truly into its own. "Woe to you, lawyers", thunders Jesus, "for you lock the kingdom of Heaven against men: you yourselves will not enter and you try to prevent those who would go in." Those who combine devotion to the law and resistance to the kingdom find themselves struggling with Jesus and overshadowed by his eschatological woe.

In this earliest form of the so-called Stürmerspruch we therefore find ourselves taken to the heart of the mission of Jesus. According to him, the encounter between God and man and the relationship between man and God is not and can no longer be based on law and prophets. In spite of attempts by Luke, Matthew and even the editor of Q to de-radicalize him and indeed John the Baptist, attempts which varying degrees displace eschatology in favour of salvation history, the sharp edge of the message of both John and Jesus can still be recovered. Through both equally there sounded the message of the kingdom radically new and dangerously new.

Notes

1. The Theology of Saint Luke (London 1961), p23
2. Reprinted in Essays on NT Themes (London, 1964) pp15-47
3. op.cit., pp42f.
4. "Die Täufertradition bei Matthäus", BZ 3 (1959), 271-289 (279).
5. The abbreviation 'diff' indicates that one version of given material differs from another.
6. We may compare the similar thrust of the "a greater than Solomon is here" and "a greater than Jonah is here" sayings, applied to Jesus and also in Q (Matt 12.42,41 = Luke 11.31,32).
7. It is therefore not correct to view the presentation of John as prophet as the major concern of the passage, as suggested by E. Klostermann, Das Matthäusevangelium (Tübingen, 2nd ed., 1927); R. Bultmann, The History of the Synoptic Tradition (Oxford 1963), p164.
8. Similarly, Trilling, art.cit., 278; D. Daube, The NT and Rabbinic Judaism (London 1956) p286 draws attention to the parallel in 1 Kings 1.6
9. A. Harnack, The Sayings of Jesus (London 1908), p16, argues thus but then reconstructs the Q form in line with Luke, with the exception of the order "the prophets and the law".
10. Studien zur Theologie der Logienquelle (Münster 1972), pp50-60
11. Similarly, J. Schmid, Matthäus und Lukas (Freiburg 1930), p285; Trilling, art.cit., 276-279.
12. See H. Schürmann, Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu den synoptischen Evangelien (Düsseldorf 1968), pp117f.
13. Similarly, Schmid, op.cit., p284; Trilling, art.cit., 276
14. H. Schürmann, Das Lukasevangelium I (Freiburg 1969), p421.
15. Thus, the overlap between "lawyers" in Luke 11.45 and the Matthaean redactional "weightier matters of the law" in 23.23 suggests that Luke has preserved the Q formulation.
16. Schürmann, Lukas, pp422ff.
17. J. Jeremias, The Parables of Jesus (London 1963), p80
18. We need not therefore adopt the unsupported suggestion of Jeremias (grounded in objections to the existence of Q) that v32 was a pre-Matthaean addition to the parable, op.cit., pp80ff.
19. hodos, W. Michaelis TDNT 5 (1967), pp42-96 (86f)
20. Op.cit., p70
21. Otherwise, S. Schulz, Q - Die Spruchquelle der Evangelisten (Zürich 1972), p261.
22. So Schulz, op.cit., p262
23. Hoffmann, op.cit., p52
24. op.cit., p264

25. Op.cit., p60
26. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, H.J. Held, Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew (London 1963), p63.
27. Biazomai, G. Schrenk, TDNT I (1964), pp609-614. Even though harpazein can denote an action which is approved (cf. Matt 12.29/Mark 3.27), the object of the action will make the approval clear, and opposition is clearly involved.
28. Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God (London, ET 1971), p70
29. The Quest of the Historical Jesus (London<sup>3</sup>, 1954), pp355f)
30. P. Billerbeck, Handkommentar I, p598f
31. O. Betz, "Jesu heiliger Krieg", NovT 2 (1957), 116-137 (118-121).
32. Contra J. Wellhausen, Das Evangelium Matthaei (Berlin 1904), p54; G. Bornkamm, Jesus of Nazareth (London 1960), p73
33. G. Schrenk, art.cit., p613; W.G. Kummel, Promise and fulfilment, (London 1961), ppl21f; E. Schweizer, The Good News According to Matthew (London 1976), p262; W. Wink, John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition (Cambridge 1968), p19; N. Perrin, Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus (London 1967), p76f; O. Betz, art.cit., 126, appealing however to Matt 11.5 and 12.28.
34. This article was first published in the Journal of Theology for Southern Africa 25 (1978), 50-61, and is reprinted here by kind permission of the Editor.
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Fidelity or Wishful Thinking in recent New Testament  
Translation?

E.A. Russell

The initial impulse to write this paper was the appearance of yet another translation of the four Gospels, a translation which is remarkably fresh and original, immensely suggestive and luminous, whose claim on the cover is fully justified that it is "largely devoid of traditional 'biblical' phraseology." /1 We shall be looking at this translation later. The paper was also prompted by the fact that experience of class translation from Greek into English has underlined the difficulty for many of escaping from the "numinous" phrases of the Authorised or King James Version into modern idiom. On occasions, some manage to find, with undoubted distinction, a considerable flair for good modern style and expression. Yet on the whole it may be suspected that all too frequently such a gift is not developed. Pressures of the ministry can be prodigal of time and opportunities or incentives for exercising such a literary or scholarly flair diminish if they do not disappear altogether.

But the importance of escaping from archaic forms of expression does not end with a College farewell. The cultivation of a fresh and vigorously relevant expression is all of a piece with showing that the church is related to the life of today and not fossilized in the "translationese" and traditions of remote generations. The problems of achieving an effective modern translation are, of course, not easy. The Greek of the NT is no longer assessed, as it used to be before the findings of the Egyptian papyri, by Classical norms. Rather the books of the NT are most frequently written in what we might describe as "semitized" Greek, i.e. a Greek that reflects a Hebrew or Aramaic background. It is a Greek immensely influenced by the Septuagint, the "Bible of the early church", itself written in "semitized" Greek. /2

But the problems for the translator are not only rooted in the first century of the Christian era. From 1611, the date of publication of the AV, this version has dominated the English-speaking world. The spate of modern translations has threatened its dominance to some extent, but there continue to be certain pockets of the English-

speaking church which are loth to put any other version in its place. And we should not be over-impatient with the Protestant churches which, like most traditions in Northern Ireland, have had their reverence for the Scriptures and the high view of their inspiration fostered by the seventeenth century version. Literary critics like T.S. Eliot can speak of the AV as "an exemplar of English prose for successive generations of writers" while, at the same time, describing the New English Bible as a "combination of the vulgar, the trivial, and the pedantic". /3

Yet language today is changing rapidly and Greek words which found effective English renderings in the seventeenth century can be distorted by the change in meaning of the English. Two illustrations will suffice. One is perhaps well-known. It is the AV phrase "Take no thought" which occurs on three occasions in Matthew chapter 6, relating to food, clothing and the morrow. In the seventeenth century it meant to "distress oneself", "vex oneself". Indeed the expression "to die of thought" meant "to die heart-broken". /4 The expression "take no thought for to-morrow" has given rise to attacks on the Sermon on the Mount on the ground that it encouraged a reckless regard for the future. /5 The Greek term, however, behind such phrase is merimnaō which means "Be not anxious". Again in Luke chapter 13, v7 we have the question, "Why cumbereth it the ground?" "Cumber" in the seventeenth century meant "vex" or "injure", but is misleading today and does not render correctly the Greek word katargeō, (spoil). /6 Modern Greek can at times be sharply contrasted with Classical, or show merely a slight but important shift. Perhaps we may illustrate from the Athens daily newspaper Avriane of the 28th March, 1981. One column had the following heading: 60,000 aftokinēta ephugan apo tēn Athēna. The word ephugan in Classical and NT Greek has the meaning "fled" and thus gave the impression that such a flight was due to the fear of earthquakes. In modern Greek, however, the word means "leave" and what we were being told was that on a stated holiday 60,000 cars left Athens! The point then is made that language is a changing entity whether from the first century or the seventeenth, not to speak of the remarkable advances in the science of translation.

The two basic criteria for effective translation from the Greek NT into English are reliability and readability. /7

It is surprisingly difficult to achieve both. The Revised Version of 1831 was a trustworthy translation. By its attempt to translate the same Greek word by the same English word and to introduce as few alterations as possible, consistent with faithfulness, it produced a good students' version. But its very fidelity was its own undoing from the point of view of the reading public. It never replaced the AV in public worship or private devotion.

/8 Among recent translations that have aroused special interest, especially in conservative circles, is the New International Version. /9 Here again the translators aimed at and achieved a reliable translation. It was, however, on the score of readability that it fell down. They aimed at a new translation but they also "sought to preserve some measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English." It becomes evident that the effort to maintain continuity with the past has greatly reduced the effectiveness of this version in a modern setting.

We may put it simply - the AV was altogether too dominant, at least this is the accusation levelled against TIV. "On virtually every page the dependence of the NIV translators upon the KJV tradition is obvious in the choice of vocabulary, time-honoured clichés, syntactic structures which parallel the Hebrew and the Greek, and stylistic features." /10 Among the examples that are chosen from Matthew, we propose to look at a few so-called "in-group jargon for Christians on Sunday morning". /11

In Matthew 1.18 and 1.23 the NIV has "be with child", and this follows the AV rendering in both places. Yet not all modern translations feel they can abandon this familiar and sensitive and - dare we say it? - dignified phrase. In 1.18 the variation in translation is perhaps predictable, "with child" (RSV, NEB and JB); "be pregnant" (Mf, Phillips(P)); "expecting a child" /12, "Going to have a baby(child)" (TEV, WB). In 1.23, we have "be with child" (P), "conceive" (Mf, RSV, NEB, JB, WB), "will become a mother" (Mercier), "become pregnant" (TEV). It is perhaps unwise, as Dr Barry Newman does, to dismiss the phrase "be with child" as mere "translationese". It is by no means a simple choice between "be with child" and "be pregnant".



Another illustration of the "in-group jargon" is the address of John the Baptist to the Pharisees and Sadducees, "Brood of Vipers". Here again we wonder if this is not too hasty a judgment and whether the complexity of the issue has been examined sufficiently by Dr Newman. The phrase "Brood of vipers" of Matthew 3 and v7 is retained by six modern translations, MF, RSV, NEB, JB, WB, Mercier. It is not, in our judgment, improved by "serpent's brood" (even Phillips cannot avoid "brood") or "You snakes" (TEV). NIV did not follow the term "generation" (AV) any more than the other modern translations and it is just as readable as they.

We may take one more example of this so-called "translationese", the extraordinarily difficult "poor in spirit". This difficulty is reflected in the translations where two modern translations cannot escape the phrase "poor in spirit" (RSV, JB). Phillips ends up rather feebly with "humble-minded" while others expand with a word which stresses the fact of their awareness, viz, the elaborate "who realize the destitution of their own lives" (WB), "...feel poor in spirit" (MF), "know they are spiritually poor" (TEV), "know they are needy" (Mercier), "know that they are poor" (NEB). It is not to be wondered at if, with such an elusive phrase, the NIV kept to "poor in spirit". Again it may be wondered if sufficient caution was exercised in this indictment of Dr Newman.

Other criticisms of the NIV are. however, not so easy to fute, e.g. an uneasy blend of the old and the new: there is little excuse for holding on to ancient ways of reckoning the hours of the day in the Gospels, e.g. 'third hour', 'ninth hour', 'sixth hour' and yet use a modern method in Acts, "three in the afternoon" (3.1; 10.3,30), "about noon" (10.9) and "at nine tonight" (23.23); alongside quite stilted and formal expressions we find phrases that are rightly charged with verging on slang, e.g., "had your fill" (John 6.26) or the incredible "have a bite" (John 6.7); and what of the crude "take me for a fool" (2 Cor 11.16) or "cover-up" (1 Peter 2.16). /13. The translators claim that they have tried to reflect the differing styles of the biblical writers but this hardly justifies some of the expressions used. In any case how far can a translator avoid his own idiosyncrasy of style? The use of lengthy sentences is hardly suited to

a translation which aims at being readable. Some of the most glaring examples are in Romans 1.1-4 and 2 Peter 2.4-9. The former has 72 words and is couched in such a way as to make it most difficult for the ordinary reader. The latter has a word count of 151, occupying 21 lines of the NIV text, with 5 conditional clauses, two "but" clauses and two temporal. It is evident that on the score of readability, the NIV is often sadly amiss.

The NT writings are documents of faith, written by people of faith, and intended to win people for the faith or to build up people in the faith. If then we find those who claim that mere expertise in language does not by itself qualify a person to translate the NT but that he must share the faith of the writers, there are few church members who would differ from that point of view. They could well make the words of the Living Bible their own, "The man who isn't a Christian can't understand and can't accept these thoughts from God. They sound foolish to him because only those who have the Holy Spirit within them can understand what the Holy Spirit means. Others just can't take it in." (1 Corinthians 2.14)

If it is probably true that only those within the context of faith are equipped to translate the NT and discern the subtle nuances of the theological terms, yet such translators may and do bring their own presuppositions with them and dogmatic reasons can not only affect the text but also the very terms in which the translation is couched. Those within the Reformed tradition, for example, would find it impossible probably to discard all the presuppositions with which they might approach the text. The expression of such a faith may be "frozen", so to speak, in a confession and such confession(s) can become the norm and directive by which the translation of Scripture is assessed and expressed. The tendency can be to absolutize often the terms of such confession - in addition to the words of Scripture - with the consequent denial that there is anything situational in such a confession or even in Scripture. Thus the suggestion that such theology was evolving and, to some extent, determined by a historical situation would be flatly denied.

We may take one or two striking examples of such "wishful thinking", from "The Living Bible" described as "paraphrased". The addition of "paraphrased" implies a sensitivity to possible criticisms of its expansive style. But there is

nothing wrong with paraphrase. "The idea that faithfulness can best be preserved by a word-for-word translation is fallacious." /14 The tendency for devout people - and it can readily be understood-is to shrink from anything but the most literalist or sound translation and to assume that paraphrase is a betrayal of the original, which to them may merely be represented by the AV. "The word 'paraphrase' is the bogey of the half-educated....It is paraphrase when you translate 'Comment vous portez-vous', by 'How are you?'"

/15. But granting that paraphrase and translation are very closely related, we can seldom have a more definite declaration of bias than that we find in the preface to "The Living Bible". There we read that "The theological lodestar in this book has been a rigid evangelical position

/16 Such a translation starts off with the conviction that before it looks at the text at all, it comes with the right kind of attitude for interpreting the text. Such an attitude purports to come from the text so that the translated text can presumably tell them nothing more than they already know. If the text had something other than a basis for a rigid evangelical position, would it be fairly and faithfully translated? It is presumably an attempt to reassure the faithful that there will be no attempt to tamper with a text from which has been derived their faith. It is evident that the danger of such presuppositions is that they cannot translate faithfully. They will, just like some theologians of the past, find what they want to find. Is this not a travesty of what translation is about?

We may take two passages to illustrate the approach of "The Living Bible".

(1) John 1.17

The literal rendering of this text as given by the Revised Version is: "For the law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ". The LB renders, "For Moses gave us only the Law with its rigid demands and merciless justice, while Jesus Christ brought us loving forgiveness as well." What the original gives us is, "the law was given by Moses". The LB adds what is not in the Greek text, "with its rigid demands and merciless justice". Does the evangelist really entertain such a view of the Mosaic law? When we examine the fourteen occurrences of the Greek word for "law" (nomos) we find that the law is something which Jesus respects (7.2). Response to this law would mean response to Jesus (5.46; 7.1). Such a law is fulfilled in Jesus (1.45-5.46; 12.34-15.25), and



fair (7.49). Where are its "rigid demands" and its merciless justice". Is this a transfer from the view of Paul to the writer of the Fourth Gospel? But Paul attacks "works of the law" i.e., a legalistic scheme of justification and he not only declares that the law is holy and just and good (Romans 7.12) but appears to have been a practising Jew. Is there then such a contrast as the LB translation would suggest in John 1.17? It would appear that, in accordance with the evidence of the use of nomos in the Gospel, "the theory that v17 contrasts the absence of enduring love in the Law with the presence of enduring love in Jesus Christ does not seem to do justice to John's honorific reference to Moses. Rather v17 contrasts the enduring love shown in the law with the supreme example of enduring love shown in Jesus." /17 It would appear that this view is more in accord with the evidence given us in the Fourth Gospel.

Are we then to see behind this presentation the emergence of "the rigid evangelical position"? It is a common tendency in writings about Christianity especially of a generation or two ago to play down Judaism in order to bring out the superiority of Christianity. The result would all too often be a distortion of a proper perspective of the Jewish law. Does the Psalmist think of "rigid laws" and "merciless justice" when he writes, "Blessed Lord, teach me your rules. I have recited your laws, and rejoiced in them more than in riches. I will meditate in them.... I will delight in them and not forget them." (Psalm 119.12-16) and what consciousness of "merciless justice" do we get when we read, "He is merciful and tender toward those who don't deserve it; he is slow to get angry and full of kindness and love. He never bears a grudge, nor remains angry forever. He has not punished us as we deserve for all our sins, for his mercy toward those who fear and honour him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth." (Psalm 103.8-11) - both of these richly phrased quotations are from the Living Bible!

But these Psalms are not isolated examples. The devout Jew had an exultant and overflowing joy in keeping the law, indeed "this 'joy of the Law' is so essential an element of the understanding of the law, that it 'forms that originality of sentiment more or less delicate' which can never be

conceived by those who have experienced it neither from life nor from literature." /18 It would appear that the general rule for the Jew was, "Tremble with joy when thou art about to fulfil the commandment". /19 Rabbis indeed taught that the joy in carrying out the law was more acceptable than the commandment itself. /20

(2) John 13. 23-26

We set the passage from the LB alongside one from the RSV:

	<u>RSV</u>	<u>LB</u>
23	One of the disciples whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus;	Since I was sitting next to Jesus at the table, being his closest friend
24	So Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks."	Simon Peter motioned to me to ask him who it was would do this terrible deed.
25	So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?"	So I turned and asked him "Lord, who is it?"

This bold translation of the LB is quite unique in modern translations. It does two things (1) it identifies the author with the beloved disciple (2) and apparently with John, the apostle, son of Zebedee. This is confirmed by an incorrect footnote to the effect that "all commentators believe him to be John, the writer of this book." /21

Dr Robert G. Bratcher, in his review of the Living Bible, concludes that "in many places it is so dominated by fixed theological presuppositions that it should not serve as a model for translators." /22 It should, however, be remembered that the paraphrases of the LB can at times be of remarkable quality and it is questionable if there are many better devotional renderings of the Psalms.

We turn now, finally, to look at the translation of the Four Gospels by Mr Norman Marrow. Mr Marrow is a member of the Society of Friends, a former Open Scholar of Christ's College, Cambridge. After graduating with honours in Classics he taught Latin, Greek and Scripture at Watford

rammar School where he was Senior Classical Master for thirty years. He tries to "spell out what the Greek was really saying in ordinary (but not....banal) everyday language ..... (and) conceivably make these books available almost for the first time to people who think of themselves as agnostics, humanists, even atheists." /23 In the forefront of his mind has been "the problem of achieving true eloquence in a contemporary idiom, of rising to the needs of elevated discourse without artificiality, of being on occasion poetic". /24 Further, he aims at ways of avoiding "male chauvinist" assumptions and of mitigating passages which foster anti-semitism. /25 These are admirable aims and, in our view, Mr Marrow has been remarkably successful in his attempt. Take the difficult word for translators, "Behold" (idou), occurring in the four Gospels no less than 130 times out of the 200 occurrences (Matt 62 and Luke 57; Mark 7 and John 4). Some translators do not attempt to translate it at all, believing it to be impossible in modern idiom. Here are a few illustrations of the way in which Mr Marrow deals with it from the Nativity stories: "Behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream" (RSV) "Who should appear to him in a dream but a messenger of the Lord" (M) (Matt 1.20); "Behold, a virgin shall conceive .." (RSV), "Be assured that a maiden shall conceive" (M) (Matt 1.23); "Behold, wise men from the East" (RSV), "Who should arrive in Jerusalem from somewhere to the east but a number of earnest seekers after wisdom" (M). Who can doubt that this is "elevated discourse" expressed in modern idiom and so appropriate to the nativity account?

We have mentioned the difficulty of rendering "poor in spirit" and cited some examples above by which Mr Marrow's translation may be assessed. Here is his rendering: "happy are those who, spiritually, are as dependent as beggars." If we compare with those we have noted, is this rendering in any way inferior to them? We have seen, too, the number of translations which ended up by translating the Baptist's address to the Pharisees and Sadducees as "Brood of vipers". Here we have "You race of adders" (Matt 3.7) In Matthew 23.33 the same phrase is translated, "You descendants of adders". In all modern translations that have been quoted, the transliteration "prophet" has been retained. This translation prefers "spokesman for God" or



a variation of the phrase. It is difficult for those brought up in the biblical idiom to say whether this is better calculated to reach the unschooled or uninterested in religion. Perhaps it does. Yet again and again we are confronted with an originality of translation which does not seem out of place, e.g., "renegade excisemen" (Matt 5.46), "learned professors" (Matt 5.20) for "scribes" "whenever an official conscripts you as a bearer for a one mile stint" (Matt 5.41), "scrap-heap of Gehenna" (Matt 5.29), "putting on an act to impress their fellows" (Matt 6.2). It is not possible to do more than touch on some of the more striking examples. Occasionally the striving for a new idiom has strange-sounding results e.g., the opening phrase of the Great Commission in Matthew, "Absolute discretion has been granted me, both in heaven and here upon earth" (Matt 28.18) or "if the story leaks out at the Residency" (Matt 28.14) but that is perhaps our fault, due to our inability to readjust to fresh idiom. In John 1.10, the Greek word eksousia, translated as "absolute discretion" above, becomes "capacity" - he gave the capacity to become sons of God. In Mark 1.21, it becomes "he was teaching as of right".

The attempt to avoid "male chauvinism" is not perhaps very successful. "I will make you fishers of people" does not have the right sound, at least where the phrase "fisher of men" is all too familiar. How it would appeal to one who was outside the Christian faith would need to be tested. At times it is hard to resist the feeling that the attempt becomes downright clumsy e.g., we have no less than four occurrences of "fellow human-being" - all of them a translation of adelphos, 'brother' (p17). The final sentence of the account of the healing of the paralysed man reads, "They praised God for having granted that such things might be done by humankind (anthrōpois = men). We may well ask how far such a modernisation can be called "fidelity" to the original. Can we really make an attempt to give women a position they did not occupy in Jesus' day and that they do not have in orthodox Judaism today where men can still pray, "Thank God I was not born a woman."? Other translators have attempted to do this. We may well ask whether the translation of hupotassomenai (be subject) of 1 Peter 3.1 is justified, "You married women should adapt yourselves to your husbands" (Phillips). In attempting

the same translation of the same word in a similar context (Colossians 5.21f) where the verse runs: "Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord" (RSV), Phillips translates, "You wives must learn to adapt yourselves to your husbands, as you submit yourselves to the Lord." There is only one verb involved (hupotassomai) but it has to be translated in two different ways. Is this faithful translation? Can the NT really be rid of "male chauvinism" without considerable awkwardness?

A problem of a different kind lies in the so-called "anti-semitism" of the Gospels, especially of Matthew and of Mark. Is it endemic to the gospel record or is it something that can be eliminated by the proper translation?

According to Dr Gregory Baum who once held the view that anti-Jewish trends were peripheral to the NT, such tendencies are woven deeply into some of its major writings. If this is the case, then a translation which eliminates such strands is misrepresenting what the NT says. An attempt was made in 1970 /27 to produce a NT without anti-semitism. What it did in effect was often to eliminate the very Jewishness of the NT context where "synagogues" become "congregations", "chief priests" become "ministers", and "Gentiles" "nations"; again "Pharisees" become "separates" and "Levites" "assistants". The alteration of the text of "His blood be on us, and on our children" to "his blood be upon him" (reference Lev.20.9ff) without any textual justification recognizes the appalling influence of this in Christian persecution of the Jews but is not in any way "translation" but "perversion".

We may note a few of the ways in which Mr Marrow seeks to eliminate potentially anti-Jewish elements. In Matthew the phrase "their synagogues", which sets the church over against Judaism, becomes "local synagogues", a not impossible translation perhaps, but in the context of the Matthaean situation, may be considered dubious. "You learned professors and Pharisees, shame on you.." - Matt 23 - does serve to ease the starkness and force of "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees..". There is a certain esteem in "learned professor" unless it is considered to be ironic. "Shame on you and your play-acting" is certainly less denunciatory than "hypocrites". The reply of the mob is also much less motive and sinister, "We'll take the blame for his death - and our children". (Matthew 27.25)

But Mr Marrow, as his preface shows, is especially concerned about the misinterpretation of "The Jews" in the Fourth Gospel. /28 Most of the time - and there are 79 occurrences of Ioudaioi in the Fourth Gospel - they are consistently hostile to Jesus. It is part of the so-called dualism of the Fourth Gospel that we have light set over against darkness, life over against death, truth over against falsehood and the world over against God. The "Jews" as non-Christians, in keeping with the presentation of this dualism, are represented as part of the hostile world. /29 But even with this, it is possible to ease the severity of the presentation of Jews:- (1) by recognizing that by "The Jews" is meant the "authorities" at Jerusalem. Our translation has "for fear of the religious authorities" (20.19), "Jewish dignitaries" (19.7) and parallel phrases. (We would hardly expect "fellow-Jews", however, in 1.19; the reference is clearly to the Jewish authorities. Perhaps since the deputation was to the Baptist, it could not be viewed as "antisemitic".) (2) By making clear the identification of Jesus and his disciples as fellow-Jews with those who oppose him e.g. "fellow-Jews" (1.19;5.10; 5.18;6.41) (3) By using the adjective "Jewish" instead of the literal translation "of the Jews" (2.6;5.1;6.4)

We are grateful to Mr Marrow for a stimulating and refreshingly original translation which, if it tries to do too much, at least should occupy an honoured place among the numerous, often distinguished, translations of today.

### Notes

1. N. Marrow, The Four Gospels, Luton 1977
2. For the "semitisms" in the NT cf. C.F.D. Moule, An Idiom-Book of NT Greek, Cambridge 1953, Chapter XXV
3. Art. in Sunday Telegraph in The New English Bible, Ed. D.E.H. Nineham, London 1965, p97 - a needlessly harsh judgment.
4. J.B. Lightfoot, On a Fresh Revision of the NT, London 1871, p172, N.1
5. op.cit., p171
6. R.C. Trench, The Authorized Version of the NT, London 1859, p40
7. B. Newman, The Bible Translator, July 1980, pp 325-336.



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REVIEWS

Hans Jochen Boecker, Law and Administration of Justice in the Old Testament and Ancient East

SPCK, 1980 pp224 £8.50

In this book the author plans to do two things: (a) to set OT law within the context of ancient near eastern law, and (b) to show the uniqueness of the OT law within that context. To put this plan into operation in the two central chapters he sets the Law Code of Hammurabi of Babylon alongside the Book of the Covenant in Exodus 20:22-23:19, and these two chapters make up more than half the text. Preceding this central section we have a discussion on the administration of justice in the ancient east and the OT, followed by a useful survey of Mesopotamian legal history before Hammurabi - Urukagina's reform in the mid-third millenium, the law codes of Ur-Nammu and Lipit-Ishtar, and the code from the city of Eshnunna. Following his chapter on the Book of the Covenant, Boecker gives us a brief treatment of Deuteronomy and the Law of Holiness, with a final chapter on Apodeictic Law which is a summary and criticism of Albrecht Alt's approach to this category of law.

To carry out his stated intentions, it is necessary for Boecker to compare OT law with other law codes. Initially this project seems doomed to failure for in his introductory paragraphs he doubts the wisdom or the possibility of making any kind of worthwhile comparisons at all between legal systems! However, when he explains his methodology in more detail the possibility of making some kind of comparison begins to emerge. He believes that if we keep OT law and other ancient systems of law as separate entities it is legitimate to find "points of contact" between one complete legal system and another. This is a salutary warning for it is so easy to fall into the trap of demonstrating the superiority of OT law in its humanitarian aspect by selecting prescriptions from the OT and comparing these with similar, though somewhat harsher, prescriptions from Hammurabi's Code. Such a procedure usually comes to grief when someone reminds us that, whereas in the law of the Hebrew slave in Exodus 21 the slave is to receive his freedom in the seventh year, with Hammurabi he receives such freedom in the fourth year! If we remember that both bodies of law are fragmentary and that both arose out of specific historical situations, e.g., that Hammurabi's law code came into being at a time when he was making desperate attempts to unify the heterogeneous empire which he had built up, and if we remember further that we ourselves in difficult times readily justify the introduction of stringent measures by some such formula as "Desperate situations require drastic remedies" - we do well to heed his warning to exercise caution in making random comparisons.

In the chapter on Hammurabi, after a brief survey of the life and times of this great emperor, Boecker works his way through many of the two hundred and eighty-two sections of his code. Where there seems to be a clear "point of contact" between Hammurabi and the OT he refers to it and occasionally interrupts his discussion with an excursus on a particularly important theme. For example, having dealt with the laws in Hammurabi's code on the leasing of land, he gives us an excursus on

"Old Testament law relating to real estate" in which we learn that "according to OT law there should be no renting out of land" because in the last resort the land belongs to Yahweh and is only held in trust by the current Israelite 'owner'; hence the need for a jubilee year when land which has gone astray is restored to its 'owner'. This leads into a most illuminating discussion on the intrusion into the Israelite bloodstream of what would seem to be Canaanite legal practice where ownership of land was more of a reality - an intrusion which helped to produce a divided society whose unjust practices in due course called forth the denunciations of the eighth century prophets. There are six of these excursus scattered throughout the book. In several of them as in the one just quoted Boecker underlines the uniqueness of OT law in its wider context, a uniqueness which derives from its specific theological emphasis.

This theological aspect becomes more prominent in his detailed treatment of the Book of the Covenant which he concludes with another excursus on "the talion formula in the OT" - eye for eye etc. In the strong anti-Canaanite stance of the Prologue (Exodus 20:22-26) "the code is placed squarely under the exclusive authority of Yahweh." Indeed the Book of the Covenant may owe its origin to "the desire to standardize law on a Yahwistic basis." This Yahwistic basis is seen most strongly in the law code of Deuteronomy where "law is placed in the context of address and exhortation; it has been finally shot through with theology."

While this book does not break much new ground - that is not its intention - it provides a useful treatment of an area where it is so easy to speak in general terms of 'law in the OT' without spelling out what this meant in practical day to day life. For many students of the OT whose knowledge of ancient near eastern law consists of Hammurabi's reference to the goring ox (and a similar reference in Exodus), it is a bonus to have such a treatment of all the important early law codes, non-biblical and biblical (apart from the Decalogue) housed under one roof.

As I read the book I found myself several times being surprised. I was surprised, e.g., at how little we know of the administration of justice in OT times. It is ironic that the OT tells us so little of the mode of operation of the Hebrew legal assembly which for Boecker is "the most important legal institution of ancient Israel." I was surprised, e.g., that it is not just the OT that is concerned for the poor, the alien, the widow and the orphan - other near eastern law codes show a similar concern. And yet it is sometimes in the consideration of "points of contact" between such legal systems that by contrast the OT emphasis begins to become more evident. For example Boecker draws attention to pars. 218 and 219 of Hammurabi's code where the unfortunate surgeon whose operating skills lead to the death of a patient is to lose a hand if his patient in a 'free man' but, should the patient be a slave, he simply provides a replacement slave. I was surprised, e.g., that though his famous article on law and covenant appears in an extensive bibliography Mendenhall's approach was scarcely mentioned, Boecker preferring to adopt Gerstenberger's view "which interprets prohibitions in their original significance as 'authoritative commands of the sib or family elders'". But perhaps



this omission is understandable in view of Boecker's stated exclusion of any consideration of the Decalogue.

In conclusion, two small criticisms. (1) If in fact one picture is worth a thousand words, what a pity that a map similar to that on p59 of the original edition did not appear somewhere in the book! (2) There are several misprints none of which causes any problem in the understanding of the text. Perhaps it is also a misprint on p34 which in the discussion on Laban and Jacob changes 'Hausgott' into 'household goods'. There is a more serious problem on p61 where 'jungeren Datums' becomes 'older', tending to contradict what has been said in the preceding sentence and to make one uncertain of Hammurabi's actual dates!

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J. S. McIvor

Andrew Morton and James McLeman, The Genesis of John  
Edinburgh (St. Andrew Press), 1980  
pp xi + 219 £8.75

The origin and composition of the Fourth Gospel have been key focal points of Johannine studies in recent times. Both in its content and method of approach this work makes a special contribution to the discussion. As a historical investigation of the origins of the Gospel, it tackles two assumptions which governed the attitude of writers on the gospel for a long time since the days of the apostolic fathers: first, that the gospel is the composition of one man; secondly, that it is essentially a document which expounds by word and deed the meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. The book begins from the point of view that the reason why the origin and composition of the Fourth Gospel have remained an unsolved problem is that these two assumptions, the unity of the Gospel and the dominant influence of theology in its construction, have not been sufficiently founded.

As regards the composition of the gospel, the authors acknowledge the difficulty of identifying the various sources which the evangelist may have used. The composition of the gospel was determined by the size of a codex page which contained a fixed number of words. By the use of statistical methods "we conclude that the gospel was written on 120 pages, each with an average 588 letters on it." (p76) The beginning of a new page may coincide with the introduction of a different theme, section, or even with a different source. Not only principles of statistics but also of "stylometry" are applied to detect various sources behind the gospel. "Stylometry" is described as a technique which examines the vocabulary, the frequency of certain words, the length of sentences, even the various uses of particles (e.g., de) and conjunctions (e.g., kai) in order to determine whether a section of the gospel is homogeneous or whether it reflects different styles and, consequently, different sources. It is claimed that statistics and stylometry can disclose something about the composition of the gospel. They show that it is not a homogeneous composition but a conflation of sources used by a compiler to make a new book. An attempt is made to reconstruct how different sources were inserted and arranged by the final compiler.

With regard to the nature of the gospel, its framework provides the same outline as that which appears in Mark from the baptism of John to the empty tomb in spite of vast differences and which is probably based on the traditional account of the main events of the life of Jesus. But, more important, it is enriched by many details and additions which raise questions not only about the historical trustworthiness of such a treatment of the traditional outline but also about the intentions of the writer in producing this new account of the well-known events in Jesus' life. Special attention is given to the "additional" distinctive Fourth Gospel material, particularly to those discourses (e.g., chs 14-17) where words are attributed to Jesus which are obviously the theological reflections of the later church.

These sections show that, in contrast to the Synoptics, the Fourth Gospel is not to be regarded as a primary historical authority. It is not a collection of information about Jesus in the synoptic sense. The Jesus of the FG is the protagonist in a cosmic drama, larger than historical life. This gospel was the work of a compiler who compounded a document which gave distinctive treatment to the traditional outline of events and supplied additional material.

The originality of the FG consisted in propagating the interaction between the Logos idea and the christian message in gospel form and in speaking the gospel message to the church of the time in a new way: Jesus is the ever-present Lord and Giver of life, the unique Son of the Father who is the only way to the Father; the most important element in the christian experience is the relation of the believer to the object of his faith and that object is nothing other than the living Jesus. The author is giving a fresh definition of what it means to be a christian and bringing to the forefront what he considers to be the essence of christian discipleship, possibly in view of the danger that it may have been neglected in the church itself. The FG attained its position in the canon and its influence because it supplied the church with the possibility of an ageless theology and an ageless explanation of christian experience. It speaks in the words of Jesus Himself to the needs of the church in the post-synoptic period. The gospel is built around the thesis that the revelation takes precedence over the history and the presence of Jesus with his disciples now takes precedence over his historical presence then in Palestine. Besides, more clearly than the Synoptics, it propagates a theology of Jesus which confers on him an unsurpassable status. It expresses a religion which is timeless (p218).

These chapters about the nature of the gospel (chs 10-14), perhaps the most convincing part of the book, pinpoint and present very well some salient aspects of the distinctiveness and timeless quality of this gospel. They show why such a different approach to the gospel tradition found acceptance in the early church. The authors rightly emphasize the fact that the gospel is less in touch with the historical Christ than the Synoptics because it underlines the presence of Christ in the christian community. It reflects "an urge to give a new form to the way in which Christianity is to be interpreted." This urge "arises from within Christianity itself." (p203) However, taking the gospel as a whole, we need to recognize that the author wishes to convey a continuity between the Jesus of Palestine and Jesus as Lord present in

the community.

These reflections about the origins of the gospel are confirmed and complemented by recent johannine studies which explore the particular community situation out of which the gospel developed. The assertion that "forms of expression are used which were congenial to Hellenistic as opposed to Judaic types of thought" (p203) raises the difficult question of the background or milieu of the gospel. There is a strong case to be made for a very pervasive Jewish milieu which however was also penetrated by hellenistic and other syncretistic influences so that the Fourth evangelist was a child of a multiformed, syncretistic Judaism.

This study of the gospel also reinforces the recent tendency of scholars to abandon the stress on the unity of composition. The composition of the gospel is a very complex process in which many sources are compiled. Many attempts are being made to identify and isolate the sources behind the gospel. An original aspect of this work is that it applies meticulously modern techniques of statistics and stylometry to the problem. It is difficult to assess the conclusions drawn on the basis of these methods alone in the task of identifying and isolating the sources with sufficient accuracy and conviction. Even with the help of redaction criticism, statistics and stylometry it remains very difficult to distinguish between the contribution of the evangelist and the traditions or sources on which he draws. It remains questionable also whether the final editor may be fairly viewed just as a "compiler". But the challenge posed by the really difficult questions of the FG is boldly confronted by this work with insight and new techniques.

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James McPolin, S.J.

John Riches, Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism  
Darton, Longman and Todd, London 1980 £12.95

Riches seeks to answer the question posed by Reimarus of the purpose Jesus had for himself. This leads to an examination of the teaching of Jesus to find that which distinguished it from contemporary teaching. The teaching of Jesus utilized familiar terms - otherwise it would have been unintelligible - but a new direction to men's thoughts was given by developing the 'core meaning' of terms in ways different from current usage. Thus though "kingdom of God" had strongly nationalistic, militaristic and ritualistic associations, the core meaning of God's establishing his rule over men enabled Jesus to use it of God's dealing with Jews and Gentiles in quite new ways while at the same time remaining within the bounds of men's comprehension.

Not only is Jesus distinguished by his use of familiar terms, he is also distinguished by his avoidance of some dominant ideas. The ideas of purity and uncleanness, prominent in contemporary usage, are rejected by Jesus as unsuitable for portraying the relationship between God and man, or between man and man because their conventional associations were such that he could have used them only at the risk of serious misunderstanding.

It is argued that Jesus thought of himself as a prophet but a prophet  
110



whose role was not to gather the elect in face of the coming judgment but to initiate the process whereby evil and enmity are overcome.

In a book which recognizes the importance of Jesus' message concerning the Kingdom as well as the authenticity of some of the Son of Man sayings one would have welcomed some recognition of the argument advanced by Vielhauer in 1957 that neither in Judaism nor in Jesus' authentic teaching are the Kingdom and the Son of Man brought together and that, in fact, the two concepts are irreconcilable. Thus since the Kingdom is inescapably within Jesus' teaching, the Son of Man sayings must be regarded as inauthentic. Following Talmon's distinction between a leader's function in initiating social change and in symbolizing it, Riches concludes that the central importance of Jesus' life and work is not to be found in any particular programme but in the way he embodied this message.

This clear statement of the significance of Jesus is to be welcomed since it is reached after consideration of a wide range of contemporary scholarship. A few matters of style and printing, of argument and assertion, are open to criticism. What is meant by "diversity of instantiation"(p41)? In Leviticus 20:25 it is the ground which "teems" (RSV), not the animals, so that it is absurd to write of "eating teeming animals" (p116). There is confusion of singular and plural in "It is that by which man shall live together as God intended" (p132). On p108 capital letters whether for proper names or for the beginning of sentences, have been replaced by lower case letters. It is asserted on p154 that John the Baptist legislated for Roman soldiers, but it is more likely that the soldiers were in the service of Herod Antipas. Since there is no recorded saying of the Baptist in which the words "Son of Man" appear, it is surprising to read on p156 that "for John the end would come with the advent of the heavenly figure of the Son of Man". Only in a note to p177 is there tentatively advanced any argument to justify associating prophecy of the Son of Man with John.

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Robert Hamerton-Kelly, "God the Father", Theology and Patriarchy in the Teaching of Jesus  
Fortress Press 1979 ppxv + 128

"God the Father" is accused of much wrong in contemporary culture. Sigmund Freud was the first to propound the influential notion that behind religion and morals lies the guilty memory of the murder of the primal father. There are modern suggestions that the father is an insignificant, almost absent, figure in western consciousness but radical feminists attack patriarchy as the source of much evil. Since the divine "Father" is attacked as a block to human maturity and dignity, here in "God the Father" we have an important title in the series, "Overtures to Biblical Theology" dealing with the subject.

Robert Hamerton-Kelly develops Paul Ricoeur's analysis of a resolved Oedipus complex in the Bible along the pattern that such a complex, universal in its formation, must be destroyed if it is to return at a new

liberating level, bringing man to maturity. The elements of persistence however as well as that of destruction are discernible first in the virtual absence of the "father" description for God in the earliest traditions of the OT. God is liberator and lawgiver but never progenitor. Later God is described as having discovered and adopted his people, chosen freely without inherent merit, for a free response. A few citations of the OT liken God to a "Father", and even declare him to be a "Father" but do not invoke Him as such unlike Jesus and the early Christians, following Jesus' example under the inspiration of the Spirit. God the Father culminates in Jesus' teaching as a liberating symbol, offering a free relationship by grace instead of nature, not one depending on "the bonds of kinship and the ties of fate" (pp32,69,100). One wonders, however, if "fate" makes biblical sense. Perhaps "fear" (servile fear) is a more appropriate concept.

The author concedes that Ricoeur's analysis is vulnerable. The so-called Oedipus complex may be entirely explicable as a reaction against contemporary notions of divine paternity. Yet Hamerton-Kelly's own modification, claiming that the transition from nature to freedom does not entail "the bitter agony and hostility" of the Greek Oedipus myth (p103) is also questionable. It ignores the agony of the Cross and the Scriptural necessity for blood sacrifice to reconcile God and man. The fact that on the Cross (Jk,Mt) Jesus did not address God as Father may be significant and the use of "Father" in Luke may be redactional. It is not enough to describe the cry of Desolation as a mere quotation from Ps.22. Nor is it enough to suggest that it was his challenge of the regnant patriarchy, particularly his attitude to women, that brought Jesus to the Cross. The efficient causes of his condemnation are his desecration of the Sabbath and of the Temple (Mk 3:6,11:18, 14:58; John 5:18), i.e. the odium was more theological than sociological. The book disappoints in not discussing the birth narratives but it is excusable, given the sub-title "in the teaching of Jesus": not so the failure to view the Cross not only as a consequence but also as the purpose of Jesus' ministry (Contrast Thomas Small's recent book "The Forgotten Father", in particular the chapter "The Father, the Son and the Cross").

Stressing Jesus' radical challenge to the family and criticizing accordingly later compromise in the NT on the role of women, the author greets triumphalistically the transition from patriarchy to partnership. Unfortunately, however, he does not discuss pastoral difficulties that arise, e.g., does Jesus' teaching endorse adolescent rebellion against parents as, say, in the excesses of the Jesus movement?

Some minor criticisms may be made. On p68, Mk 10.10 should be Mark 10:17 and on p79, N.43 Mt 20:32 should be 20:23. On p20 one may add to the OT designation of God as Father, in N.1 Ps.68:5 and Malachi 2:10 and in N.3 Deut.14:1; Isaiah 1:2 and 43:6. Discussion on, or mention of, Ps. 27:10 and 131:2 would be welcome as also on James 1:17 and Eph.3:14, which present possible indications of a universal fatherhood, running counter to the more prevalent christocentric view of God as Father in the NT.

There are some larger questions on method. Was no strict distinction made between the remembered words of the historical Jesus and the inspired words of the risen Christ? Must we be restricted to Norman Perrin's minimalist criteria for rediscovering the sayings of Jesus? More fundamentally, it may be wondered if christology rather than

rather than psychology or sociology is not a better approach for considering the Fatherhood of God if Matthew 11:27 has any force. Certainly the long concluding excursus on method is sadly verbose in contrast to the relative clarity of the earlier chapters and it is not persuasive, largely perhaps because it is difficult to follow. With the reservations already stated, there is much to stimulate thought in this work.

He Manse  
ennaskea.

John G. Paris

John Gladwin, God's People in God's World  
Inter-Varsity Press 1979 pp190 £2.95

John Gladwin is director of the Shaftesbury Project, a group which tries to offer a caring and evangelical Christian approach to the problems of society. It is not often that the Shaftesbury Project hits the headlines but they are known in the world of social work as a quietly effective stimulus to thought and action.

The author states at the beginning, "I have not set out to provide the Christian viewpoint on a host of modern social questions. There is no blueprint for policy in this contribution....What I have attempted to do is to think from the fundamental conviction of our Christian faith toward the social order.....It remains for others to suggest how such an approach might work out in a particular context of activity." An understandable attitude but there were occasions when this reader would have asked Mr Gladwin to work out his approach for himself. One was left with the feeling that the theory looked fine but was rather dry and needed more illustration from real life.

Nevertheless, even without illustration this book takes an honest look at the question whether the Christian should have anything to do with the prevailing social order and answers it with a resounding 'Yes'. Living up to its sub-title, "Biblical Motives for Social Involvement", the book displays a biblical knowledge impressive in breadth and thoroughness. Worthy of note too is the author's ability to quote freely and relevantly from those with whom he would not always be expected to agree.

To present biblical motives for social involvement necessarily brings us first to the necessity of understanding creation, incarnation, redemption and the whole nature of man before we even start to enter areas of economics, politics and personal relations. To cover all, as Mr Gladwin does, in eleven chapters, calls for a compressed style and many generalisations. It also does not permit of a quick précis of the whole book. If however there is one chapter that should be underlined it is the chapter which seeks to interpret the meaning of the Cross for our involvement. We who are Christians in the affluent west are only beginning (if that) to learn the truth of some vital words: "Commitment to Christ crucified ought to make us wary of equating Christianity with the prevalent culture of the age..... (Jesus) never simply conformed to the



patterns of his day. He questioned them and sometimes confronted them."

Perhaps the difficulty for many Christian people today is in knowing what questions to ask, and sensing that they may not be totally isolated if they dared to obey their consciences and confront some late twentieth century patterns. As the author very rightly points out, such involvement and confrontation means that one may have to take risks. How necessary it is for us to remember that not only those who write from a liberal theological standpoint realize that following Christ involves risk! All in all a valuable book although more palatable in small doses than in huge chunks.

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Donald Ker

Peter Hinchliff and David Young, The Human Potential  
Darton Longman & Todd, London 1981  
£4.50

Some thirty years ago, Alasdair McIntyre, writing from a point of view sympathetic to religious belief, was maintaining "in an account of religion we have nowhere found a place for a point at which a transition can be made from non-religious to religious language. One can accept religion on its own terms or reject it: there is no way of justifying it by translating it into other terms." Again in the same essay (The Logical Status of Religious Belief 1957), "Belief cannot argue with unbelief; it can only preach to it." Much the same point was being made, at least until fairly recently, by D.Z. Phillips and others whose main contention has been that religion is a specific "form of life" with its own criteria and its own method of settling its own questions.

"The Human Potential" is worthy of note in that it constitutes a deliberate and, on the whole, successful attempt to do what was being described as impossible by McIntyre and the others. Dr Runcie welcomes the book as the writers' attempt "to express what they have learned through the Christian tradition in terms which are more accessible to those who stand outside that tradition". The authors themselves state as their aim on p9, "To present religious belief intelligibly for the benefit of those who do not believe" and on p86, "to present religion as an intelligible standpoint from which to make sense of reality". It is argued that the starting-point must be in our common experience on which is based our understanding of the way things are. Such understanding becomes possible when we use the nature of the human personality as a model for the whole of reality: we come to see that beyond and beneath the material universe there is a principle which transcends it and which becomes known to us as a living personal dimension. In this awareness of the true nature of existence lies the kernel of religious faith. The apologist's task is to present it intelligibly, to ask whether it can be vindicated, to examine the way

which it entails a moral commitment and to explore the nature and reality of the devotional life which it makes possible. The intelligible presentation requires that the key concept, that of God's existence, should be defined in an acceptable form of words and it is suggested that the claim that God exists is to be understood as the claim that all existence has a personal base or core (p13). Just as we must reject Cartesian dualism between mind and body, so too we must reject the dualism between God and the world. "For if God exists in a way utterly different from the way in which the universe exists...it is hard to conceive how he could affect the other." (p29) The problem now becomes one of giving content to the vague and empty notion of the personal dimension possessed by all reality and this is attempted in terms of its ostensibly purposive behaviour and its ability to enter into relationships with the persons who are part of that reality.

It may be that in this crucial attempt, we find the weak point in the argument. The verbs "behave" and "relate to" require for their significant use, that their subjects should be logically proper names. Where, therefore, they are used to describe the action of all-that-is, then we must be speaking metaphorically and a rule for translation should be provided. And indeed this seems to be admitted "since language is inadequate for describing God". If the authors' purpose in the book is to succeed, one might wish to hear more of the reasons for such inadequacy and of its nature and extent.

In chapter 3 we have an honest attempt to face up to some of the difficulties in using the suggested mind-body analogy for understanding God's relationship with the material universe. Valuable treatments are given of the problems of the freedom of the individual, the doctrine of creation and the existence of evil. The language of creation, it is suggested, is metaphorical rather than literal and it is used to make the point that the physical universe exists within the scope of God's purpose and is indeed the expression of it. Evil, as a necessary element in such a living universe, may be part of that purpose also. The final answer to its existence in our experience as suffering, may not be an intellectual answer at all but may come when we see Christ dealing with it by caring for those who suffered and accepting it willingly when it came to himself.

This introduces the theme of the next three chapters - that it is only by using Jesus Christ as our "stencil" that we can make sense of reality. The doctrines of the incarnation, resurrection, salvation, grace and prayer are dealt with in ways that are not far from the traditional, though with perhaps more than the usual emphasis on the notion of the community. For instance, salvation is a restoration of lost unity and harmony; it is from individuality into community, not only with other men and women but with the whole of reality and so with God. There is also, as we should expect, an evaluation of the NT record concerning Jesus as being based on historical fact but also as the account of the experience of individuals and of the Christian community.

Chapter 7 provides a thoughtful and sensitive exposition of the Christian ethic of love in which a valuable relationship is established between faith, worship and the life of the community. Indeed it is maintained that the community is both the manifestation of Christ and the instrument of grace. In the final chapter the authors look back and realize that the emphasis has been this-worldly and that it needs to

be corrected by "the eternal dimension". Eternal life is affirmed but apart from negative statements which emphasize its discontinuity and difference in quality all we can say positively is that its quality is that of a life determined by Christian morality and that this is, in turn, a life patterned on the life of Christ.

Does "The Human Potential" succeed in its professed aim to make the Christian faith intelligible to those who stand outside? Only those to whom it is directed could answer definitively but there is no doubt that the book faces the difficulties honestly and pursues its chosen path with intellectual integrity. Of one thing there can be no doubt - to the believer the book presents a thoughtful challenge to examine again the implications of his Christian experience for the moral and devotional life

The New University  
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Harold Nicholl

Edmund Flood, <u>Today's Catholic</u>	£2.75
John Dalrymple, <u>Longest Journey</u>	£2.20
John Main, <u>Word into Silence</u>	£1.99

Darton Longman & Todd 1980

A half generation has passed since the Second Vatican Council. Much benefit has come to us from the weighty writings of eminent theologians. Shorter books are now coming to hand so that the ordinary reader, "Catholic" in any sense of the word, may be helped to order life through discussion of the burning issues of our time, individual and corporate. A welcome feature of these three books under review is that they show openness to the whole church and the wider community towards which any church must be directed in prayer and activity of any kind.

Today's Catholic is No.1 in a series of twelve handbooks dealing with Practical Theology, by which is meant the putting of theology into practice. Edmund Flood and John Coventry are joint editors. Both are well known for their writings on a variety of subjects and their names will ensure the quality of the series.

Dom Edmund Flood writes with zest springing from his conviction that God's people have been graciously enriched with the unique gift of life and hope for the whole world. How can church members be stirred from their dormant state to appreciate these gifts? How are they then to convey them to the whole community? The author traces four central affirmations of theology to provide the answer - sharing in God's creation and plan; sharing in the incarnation by commitment to the real world of today; sharing in the community of believers and in the wider community of which all are members; sharing life in God through prayer and assimilation of his Spirit.

From that Trinitarian launching-pad to which he frequently returns



he draws on personal experience on both sides of the Atlantic and describes how, in groups as well as individually, these great truths are illuminating today's dilemmas. Family, divorce, abortion, contraception, church leadership and problems of bringing morality into Christian decision making provide material for study and reflection. A selection of questions comes at the end of each chapter to guide discussion and study, in groups or by an reader.

Each of these subjects is to be treated in greater detail in the eleven books to complete the series. But there is plenty in this book to whet the appetite. There is no shirking of the realities of each situation. Divorce is taken as the subject of a chapter "because it provides a good example of how today's catholic is moving towards a more developed morality". We are told that there are six million divorced Roman Catholics in the USA. While the church must continue to give to the world its valuable witness that marriage is permanent, nevertheless "we don't have to say that a Christian marriage cannot die. All we need to say is that we have a very serious obligation to prevent it from dying."

The chapter on Christian leadership takes up nearly a third of the book. The roles of priest, bishop and church member (male and female) are assessed in the light of the Bible and today's experience of the people of God. In the diocese of Newark USA, some 35,000 members take part weekly in groups of ten and twelve. They have a threefold purpose - to know and respond to the word of God; to develop "vibrant faith communities"; "to reach out and bring good news to all". Leaders emerge and are trained. Learned skills are revealed and developed in hundreds of members. Christ is working through such communities of men and women as they meet and face life's pressures and possibilities.

Today's catholic is ever to be looking towards the world. This book provides him with several contrasting pictures of the older and newer approaches to morality. There may be conflict between official teaching and that of the growing number of moral theologians. Leadership is at its best in "reading" the growing consensus among members as in their situations they respond to other people, to themselves and to God. There is a valuable chapter on prayer - public and private - and prayer is the main theme of each of the other two books under review.

John Main, also a Benedictine, deals with spirituality today in his book, Word into Silence. It is a recording in print of sound tapes he made in London to assist people with their development of meditation skills. His thesis is that we must "turn aside", not to avoid or to escape from life, but to discover through meditation the deepest centre of our being. Here we encounter the spirit of Jesus dwelling within.

This author has had wide experience, first as a civil servant overseas, then as a lecturer in international law in Trinity College, Dublin before entering his Order, in London and later in Montreal. Meditation is a process of learning, paying attention, concentrating, bringing into focus those realities by which we are led into the personal mystery of our own personhood, which finds its completion in the person of Jesus Christ.

Here we have a handy introduction to Christian meditation as many are practicing it today. The author moves easily between John Cassian (so influential on Benedict) and the traditional forms of religions of the East e.g., saying the 'mantra', and transcending and renewing the self by

attention to bodily posture and control of breathing. He outlines twelve steps for meditators through which one may overcome today's sense of alienation and discover personal harmony and true unity in the Holy Spirit - an excellent Lenten exercise book!

John Dalrymple takes his title, Longest Journey from Dag Hammarsskjold, "The longest journey is the journey inward". He is a parish priest in Scotland and an experienced chaplain to St Andrews University with several earlier books on spiritual matters.

His conversion when around twenty years of age was a fairly typical experience, but later, as he says, he had to "dip beneath mere 'experience to reality itself". Now he looks around and finds a host of issues on every hand in which mankind as a whole is involved. Is one to shirk them and to opt out? Each one bears a large ethical question mark. The problem is finding a solution to act upon if one does try to cope with the changes urgently dictated in our time. There is a double journey on which the Christian finds it necessary to engage - outward as well as inward. We must bring these issues within ourselves where we reflect, find God within and sort out our values in the light of Jesus Christ. Then we swing outwards again to meet world situations renewed in judgment and attitude.

The parish needs to experience "open house", if possible in the priest's home, meeting a team ministry, and becoming more and more a community. Freedom is the objective but "it takes a lot of maturity to be free". As a guide to contemplation, the author suggests seven "happenings". These are not stages of growth but take place simultaneously. There is intuition rather than reasoning; silence taking over from speech in prayer; passive, receptive approach, trusting the hand of God; baffled wonder and ineffability in God's presence; love going beyond clear intellectual thinking; consciousness of self giving way to growing consciousness of God; prayer descending beneath the surface of life and entering into the depths of our personality.

With the help of the idea of the snake changing from its old to its new skin, we are shown how Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Day afford a scheme for dying to the old and rising to the new life. This spiritual breakthrough forms another "Copernican Revolution" as "it dawns upon us that God is not in our world; we are in his."

These three books make a really valuable contribution to our insights into Catholic spirituality since Vatican II and will undoubtedly help many to relate the life of the Spirit to the everyday issues of our complex world.

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